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Bits

BLUES IN THE SOUTH

NOVEMBER 2025

Issue #463

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LAURA EVANS

INTERVIEW WITH
BAD TEMPER JOE

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BY JOHN HOLMES

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BLUES GIGS: FROM EXMOUTH TO EASTBOURNE AND A BIT MORE BESIDES

- 01/11 **THIRD DEGREE** @ The Platform Tavern, Southampton, 20:30
- 06/11 **PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM** @ The Bull Hotel, The Headlands, Downton, SP5 3HL 20:00
- 11/11 **BRIXHAM BLUES** @ The Birdcage, Brixham, 20:00
- 12/11 **PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM** @ The Duck Inn, Duck Lane, Laverstock, SP1 1PU, 19:30
- 13/11 **STEVE BUCKLEY & ROB LUFT** @ Teign Corinthian Yacht Club (Teign Jazz & Blues), <https://teignjazzandblues.co.uk/event/strange-news-with-steve-buckley-and-mike-outram/>, 19:30
- 15/11 **THIRD DEGREE** @ Conford Village Hall, 19:30
- 16/11 **THIRD DEGREE** @ Poole Hill Brewery, 15:00
- 21/11 **DOM MARTIN TRIO** @ Teignmouth Pavilions (Teign Jazz & Blues), <https://www.pavilionsteignmouth.org.uk/events/dom-martin-live-stage>
- 25/11 **ROBBEN FORD WITH SUPPORT BY LAURA EVANS** @ The Komedia, Bath, 19:00
- 27/11 **ROBBEN FORD WITH SUPPORT BY LAURA EVANS** @ The Brook, Southampton, 19:00
- 28/11 **THIRD DEGREE** @ Thomas Tripp, Christchurch, 21:00
- 04/12 **RUSSEL SINCLAIR BAND** @ Teign Corinthian Yacht Club (Teign Jazz & Blues), <https://teignjazzandblues.co.uk/event/russell-sinclair-band/>
- 04/12 **PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM** @ The Bull Hotel, The Headlands, Downton, SP5 3HL 20:00
- 09/12 **BRIXHAM BLUES** @ The Birdcage, Brixham, 20:00
- 10/12 **PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM** @ The Duck Inn, Duck Lane, Laverstock, SP1 1PU, 19:30
- 12/12 **THE SPIKEDRIVERS** @ The Emsworth Music Club, 43 Havant Road, Emsworth PO10 7JF, www.emsworthmusic.club
- 01/01/26 **PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM** @ The Bull Hotel, The Headlands, Downton, SP5 3HL 20:00





Most Played Album Top 40 - September 2025

Collated from the playlists of the Independent Blues Broadcasters Association members

Position	Artist	Album
1	MARY STOKES BAND	HOMETOWN BLUES
2	BLOOD BROTHERS	HELP YOURSELF
3	BYWATER CALL	SUNSHINE: LIVE 2024
4	WALTER TROUT	SIGN OF THE TIMES
5	TOM HAMBRIDGE	DOWN THE HATCH
6	BISON HIP	EVERYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE WAS JUST LEADING UP TO THIS
7	THE BONESHAKERS	LIVE TO BE THIS
8	BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES	THE BLUES IS MY BIOGRAPHY
9	BUDDY GUY	AIN'T DONE WITH THE BLUES
10	ROBERT JON & THE WRECK	HEARTBREAKS & LAST GOODBYES
11	JOE BONAMASSA	B.B. KING'S BLUES SUMMIT 100 VOL. 1
12	DEBBIE BOND	LIVE AT THE SONG THEATRE
13	BB & THE BULLETS	HIGH TIDE
14	KIRK FLETCHER	KEEP ON PUSHING
15	JOHN FOGERTY	LEGACY: THE CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL YEARS
16	ALICE DI MICELE	REVERSE THE FLOW
17	MUD MORGANFIELD	DEEP MUD
18	GWYN ASHTON	GREASE BUCKET
19	CONNOR SELBY	THE TRUTH COMES OUT EVENTUALLY
20	ROBERT KANE	BLUES IS BLUES
21	BIG WOLF BAND	LIVE AT JOE JOE JIM'S
22	EARL THOMAS	LIVE IN LONDON
23	SHERMAN ROBERTSON	ONE MORE TIME EP
24	MICK SIMPSON	CHANGING TIMES
25	RASHAD THE BLUES KID	LIVE IN CLARKSDALE
26	ROOMFUL OF BLUES	STEPPIN' OUT
27	BURNING ROPE	BURNING ROPE
28	THE 251s	FROM THE FIVE
29	ALICE ARMSTRONG	FURY & EUPHORIA
30	PIPER & THE HARD TIMES	GOOD COMPANY
31	LARRY MCCRAY	HEARTBREAK CITY
32	MONSTER MIKE WELCH	KEEP LIVING 'TIL I DIE
33	BIG SHOES	KING SIZE
34	MAD DOG FRIEDMAN	LIVE & ALONE
35	TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND & LEON RUSSELL	MAD DOGS & ENGLISHMEN REVISITED: LIVE AT LOCKN'
36	CANDICE IVORY	NEW SOUTHERN VINTAGE
37	EVA CARBONI	THE BLUES ARCHIVES
38	DEVON ALLMAN	THE BLUES SUMMIT
39	MIKE DANGEROUX	15 SHADES OF BLUE
40	THE MIGHTY BOSSCATS	4000 WEEKS





Editorial

October 22, 2025 - From the desk of Ian McKenzie

As many of you know, when BiTS started in the hands of Bob Pearce, it was a single page of A4. It has grown a bit since then.

One of the aims is to bring readers as much information as we can, to allow them to go to the very best gigs by their favourite musicians.

There is no better way of doing that than to provide you, the reader, with examples of the music produced by artists in the form of video or audio files which come as part of the publication.

In the last year or so the number of videos and audio files has grown and it is now time to be a bit inventive to see where we might go next.

From this month all audio will be signified by the use of the image:



Clicking on that image will have a different effect depending on which version of BiTS you are reading; in the standard PDF it will open an external YouTube file which will be audio only; in the Flip Version of BiTS it will open an audio file which is embedded in the text. You will not, as above, be taken to an external site.

Video files will continue to be indicated by the symbol below and the effect will be similar.



In the PDF scrolling version, clicking the link will take you to an external site to view it. In the flip version, clicking the link will result in an embedded video-file playing.

Please feel free to download and try both versions if you wish. Let me know about problems

NB: It is my intention that the PDF scrolling version shall at some time copy the behaviour of the Flip version, which is possible (I think) but at the moment too expensive.

Onward and upward!

Ian K McKenzie

THE BITS INTERVIEW: LAURA EVANS

Laura Evans (born 27 August 1986) is a British actress and singer, best known for her role as Madison Square-Gardens in the popular BBC television children's show The Basil Brush Show and more currently known as a blues singer. She is about to start (November 2025) [a tour](#) to promote her new album "Out of the Dark". Later in the month she is supporting Robben Ford.

She was a finalist in the 2025 UK Blues Federation, Blues Challenge.

Ian McKenzie spoke to her at her home.



BiTS: Right Laura, let's make a start. Tell me something about how you got into music in the first place. I know you went to stage school, but were you kind of enthusiastic about singing and performing at a very young age?

LE: Yes, yes, definitely. I started singing, I think as soon as I could speak, and I'm from a family of singers in Wales. So yeah, I've been singing since I was about six, I would think.

BiTS: Tell me about going to the stage school then.

LE: So when I was about 14, I auditioned to go to Sylvia Young Theatre School because we used to get a magazine every week called The Stage, and they were holding scholarship auditions. So I begged my mum and dad to ask if I could audition and then they let me and then I ended up winning the scholarship and going there. So I left Wales when I was about 14 and moved to London.

BiTS: You make it all sound very easy. I'm pretty sure a lot of it was pretty hard, wasn't it?

LE: [Chuckles] Oh, it was really hard. I think that was probably the hardest thing, actually, leaving home at 14. But I felt like it was my calling, really.

BiTS: So tell me what were the sort of things that you did whilst you were at the school?

LE: Well, it was just full of super talented kids, really, that could do everything – sing, act, dance. And I must admit, I thought my biggest talent really was singing. I kind of hung on to that and tried to just focus on that because it was like my main thing that I could kind of do just as

good or not better than other people. But yeah, it was a lot of egos and a lot of talented people, and it was very, what's the word, competitive.

BiTS: Yeah, yeah, I imagine it was. You came through that unscathed and started a career as a musician, I suppose.

LE: Yeah.

BiTS: What was the first thing that you did when you became a, let's call it a pro, I suppose?

LE: Well, I had a bit of a kind of a rough ride after I left school because I did get taken on by a record company. I made a record, and I got a record deal quite young. And then after a couple of years, maybe it was two years, I got dropped. And then I kind of just ended up having to find my way, of course I still stuck with music. But yeah, it wasn't easy, lots of gigs, just trying to find anything I can and write songs and find other musicians to work with and all that kind of stuff. So yeah, you know, and then the longer you stick at it, the more work you get, and the easier things get, but it was quite hard at the time.

BiTS: You did some stuff for television certainly and also on the stage as well. Was that because of your training or just to fill in time or something?

LE: Yeah, it definitely was because of my training, I think. When I got dropped from my



record label, I did do a few acting classes and I got myself an agent. And then my career took a bit of a detour because I ended up landing on a kid's TV show (BBC - Basil Brush) which at the time was amazing because it was work, it was money, it was really fun. I was working at the BBC, and it was an amazing experience. So yeah, it was a little detour in my career, but one I must say that I really, really enjoyed.

BiTS: I have to say that I never saw the television programme, but I gather that the character that you played was called Madison Square-Gardens. Is that right?

LE: [Chuckles] Yeah, Madison Square-Gardens and she was a kooky American. So yeah, I had lots of fun. Playing that character was just so much fun. Yeah.

BiTS: Well, let's hope it's a prognostication for the future because you may be able to go and perform there at some stage [laughing].

LE: Yeah, that'd be great, wouldn't it [laughs]?

BiTS: Tell me about the records that you've done. I know you've got one coming out very shortly and your debut album was released 22, I think it was, wasn't it?

LE: That's right, yeah.

BiTS: And what else have you done? You've got a lot of singles and EPs and that sort of thing?

LE: Yeah, so I started releasing, I mean, I've been writing and releasing music for a long time, but in 2020, I kind of really knuckled down and kind of really honed this bluesy sound, which, well, it's kind of my own sound really, but it is definitely blues inspired, and I made a record called 'State of Mind' which was released then in 2022, and that really put me on the map. I got to support some amazing artists on tour like Robert Jon & the Wreck and Cardinal Black. Then of course, it was time to make a new record, so by the time 2024 rolled around, I felt like I was really kind of excited about the kind of music I wanted to make and the influences, so I wrote a 12-track album which is coming out very soon. And yeah, I've been rolling out all the new singles since May, which has been amazing really. I've been excited to see how everyone's reacting to all the new music, so it's been exciting.



BiTS: Well, before we get to the new album there's really a question I want to ask you, what sort of singer do you think you are because I hear a lot of country music in the way that you perform but I guess it's maybe a chance or something, or how do you label yourself?

LE: You know, I find it hard to label myself, but everyone else seems to want to label me [laughs]. I feel like I have so many influences, and maybe I do have a country tone in my voice, a folky tone in my voice. Maybe that's why people want to call it country, but I definitely feel like it's all about the song for me. I would like to just be known as a singer-songwriter that dabbles and blend genres really because I know I'm not like a classic blues singer and it's not classic country either, so I feel like it definitely blurs the lines of the genre.



BiTS: You have occasionally quite a powerful voice, to say the least [chuckles].

LE: Yeah, I mean, I love singing and my voice is my instrument, you know, and I've been singing so long, so it's quite important for me to like deliver the vocal, and I push myself with the vocals on this new record.

BiTS: Let's talk about "Out of the Dark" then. It was released in October, I believe. When did you actually make it?

LE: I actually just didn't finish making it until January this year. So all the songs pretty much were written by January, and I'd recorded a lot of stuff and then I kind of had it all ready to go by the end of January.

BiTS: When you went into the studio, was it all there? Did you do any changes in the studio?

LE: Well, I kind of did it piece by piece, but we did it quite quickly. Yeah, I worked with a great producer in London called Ian Barter, and we worked really well together. Obviously, it was a lot of back and forth and it wasn't, you know, two weeks and then you're done. It was like we started in October 2024 and then finally by the end of January it was all done with a lot of back and forth.

BiTS: Right. You write a lot of your songs yourself. How do you go about doing that?

LE: Yeah, I co-write everything. I had loads of ideas for this new album with what I wanted to write, and I worked with some great co-writers. So yeah, I mean, I love writing songs. I don't tend to not take any of the songs on unless I write them. So yeah, every song was hand-picked and really crafted with a lot of kind of detail and care.

BiTS: Do you write with an instrument? Do you play a guitar or piano while you're writing?

LE: Yeah, I do play guitar a little and I write a lot with my husband who is an amazing guitarist and then I wrote a lot with my producer Ian. He has a studio and plays lots of instruments. So yeah, we work really well together.

BiTS: Do you have a favourite track on the album?

LE: Oh, one of my absolute favourites is 'Superman'. It's actually not as popular as the other songs that have been released but yes 'Superman' I think it's one of my favourite songs on the album. I wrote it quite quickly.



BiTS: I've heard a couple of them. There's a few about at the moment before the album comes out. I think 'ATM' is an absolutely terrific song. The rhythm is fantastic.

LE: Yeah, yeah I had a lot of fun writing that song as well.

BiTS: Absolutely terrific stuff. Who do you consider are your influences?

LE: You know, I've got lots of influences, actually. I'm a big, big fan of a band called Larkin Poe.

BiTS: Ooh, I love Larkin Poe.

LE: Yeah, amazing. Obviously, I love old school artists like Bonnie Raitt and people like Aretha Franklin and, you know, the Tedeschi Trucks Band and stuff like that, old school. But I love lots of modern singers, too. You know, I love Adele. I love Alicia Keys. There's an amazing national artist called Maggie, Maggie Rose, who I love. So, it's a complete mixed bag for me at the minute. I just think there's so much great music actually out there.

BiTS: There certainly is, that's absolutely true. Tell me about the tour. When does that start? Where are you going?

LE: Yes, so my UK headline tour starts in November. We're starting in Cardiff on the 6th of November. And then we head to Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle, Kent, and London.

So it's eight shows in total, and yeah, I'm really excited to take all these new songs out on the road.

BiTS: And travelling with the band, is that right?

LE: Yeah, I'm travelling with the band, yeah. We're just a four-piece band, so we're keeping it quite small.

BiTS: Well, tell me about the band. Who are they?

LE: So I've got Daisy Pepper on bass. She's been with me quite some time now. And I've got a new guitarist on this tour, a guy from Exeter called Jake Loosemore, who's an amazing guitarist and vocalist. And then we've got Bristol-based AJ Rousell on drums. So yeah, great team.

BiTS: That's absolutely terrific. You've got a lot of travelling to do. Do you travel well? I mean, it makes you sound like a wine, I'm sorry [chuckle]. Are you happy to travel is what I mean?

LE: Yeah, I am happy, actually. I mean, it's not a big tour. It's a big tour for me, but I think on the big round scheme of things, it's not that big a tour. So yeah, I love it. If I could have done more shows I would have, but it just seemed eight shows was enough. But yeah, I absolutely love it. The hardest thing to do is picking the outfits, what to wear every night. That's the hardest decision [laughing].

BiTS: [Laughs] I gather you've got a little dog. Are you planning to take the dog with you?

LE: Oh, I wish. He's looking at me right now, actually. He knows I'm leaving him soon because the case is out already. Yeah, no, I can't take Bertie with me. He's too needy [laughs].

BiTS: Do you know an artist by the name of Joanne Shaw Taylor? She's British.

LE: Oh, I do. She always takes her doggy, doesn't she?

BiTS: She always takes her dog everywhere. That's what made me ask, yes.

LE: I know, I know. Her dog's called Hank, I know I follow them.

BiTS: That's absolutely right, yes, yes. It's not for the purpose of the interview, but I saw Joanne 30, 20 years ago, I guess, when she was just a little girl [chuckles].

LE: Oh, really? Wow.

BiTS: Anyway, let's get back to you. If you could go anywhere to perform, apart from Madison Square Garden, I'm going to rule that out. If you could go anywhere to perform, where would it be?

LE: Oh, you know, I'd love to do a big show in LA. I'd love to play the Hollywood Bowl or something. Or, yeah. I just have a dream of going to America to tour, so I think LA, any of



Joanne Shaw Taylor
with Hank

the Troubadour in LA or the Hollywood Bowl or the Greek Theatre, the big ones in LA would just be incredible, yeah.



BiTS: If this album goes well, you may well find yourself on the move to America. I mean, are you seriously planning to do something like that? What's your ambition, shall we say, over the next five years?

LE: I definitely want to just keep building my fan base really, but America, I really want to try and get there and see, play some shows just to kind of test the water. And then after this album comes out, obviously I've got to start working on another one, and I'm going to be doing some collaborations next year. So yeah, I mean, I would just love to travel a bit more overseas, find more fans and put more music out and just kind of keep on keeping on really.

BiTS: Do I gather that the new album is actually in-train, you're working on songs and that sort of thing?

LE: Yeah, well I say I'm always writing songs so there is a couple of things underway. I mean there's a long way to go but there's definitely a couple of songs underway that I've recorded. So yeah, I need to get my skates on after the tour is over and get back in the studio.

BiTS: One of the things that people who are seeking the sort of success that you are do, is to work along with somebody else, an already established star. If that was the case, who would you choose to be working with?

LE: Oh, that's a tricky one. I am actually looking to do a collaborations album next year. So I just recorded something with the Cinelli Brothers, actually.

BiTS: Oh, have you? Okay.

LE: Yeah, we just wrote a song together and we're going to put that out next year. And then I suddenly thought about all these people I'd like to write with. So, you know, there's

lots of collaborations I'd like to do maybe with Cardinal Black. I mean, if we were talking big deal, I'd love to work with Chris Stapleton or John Mayer.

BiTS: Yeah.

LE: That would be a dream. But yeah, I think there's quite a lot of amazing British artists, actually, so it'd be interesting to see. There's an amazing artist called Eddy Smith & The 507. They're pretty cool. So yeah, there's lots of room in there for collaborations, I think, next year.

BiTS: That's wonderful news. One more question, really. If you were able to choose a venue in this country to perform at, what would it be?

LE: Oh you know I think it has to be the Royal Albert Hall.

BiTS: Ah yes, the Royal Albert Hall where stars are made, I think.

LE: Yeah, because I have seen a few shows there and even though it's so big, it still feels like an intimate venue, which is crazy because it's so big. But yeah, that would be a bucket list to me.

BiTS: The acoustics are absolutely sensational and there's not a place in the whole building that you can't hear what's going on on the stage.

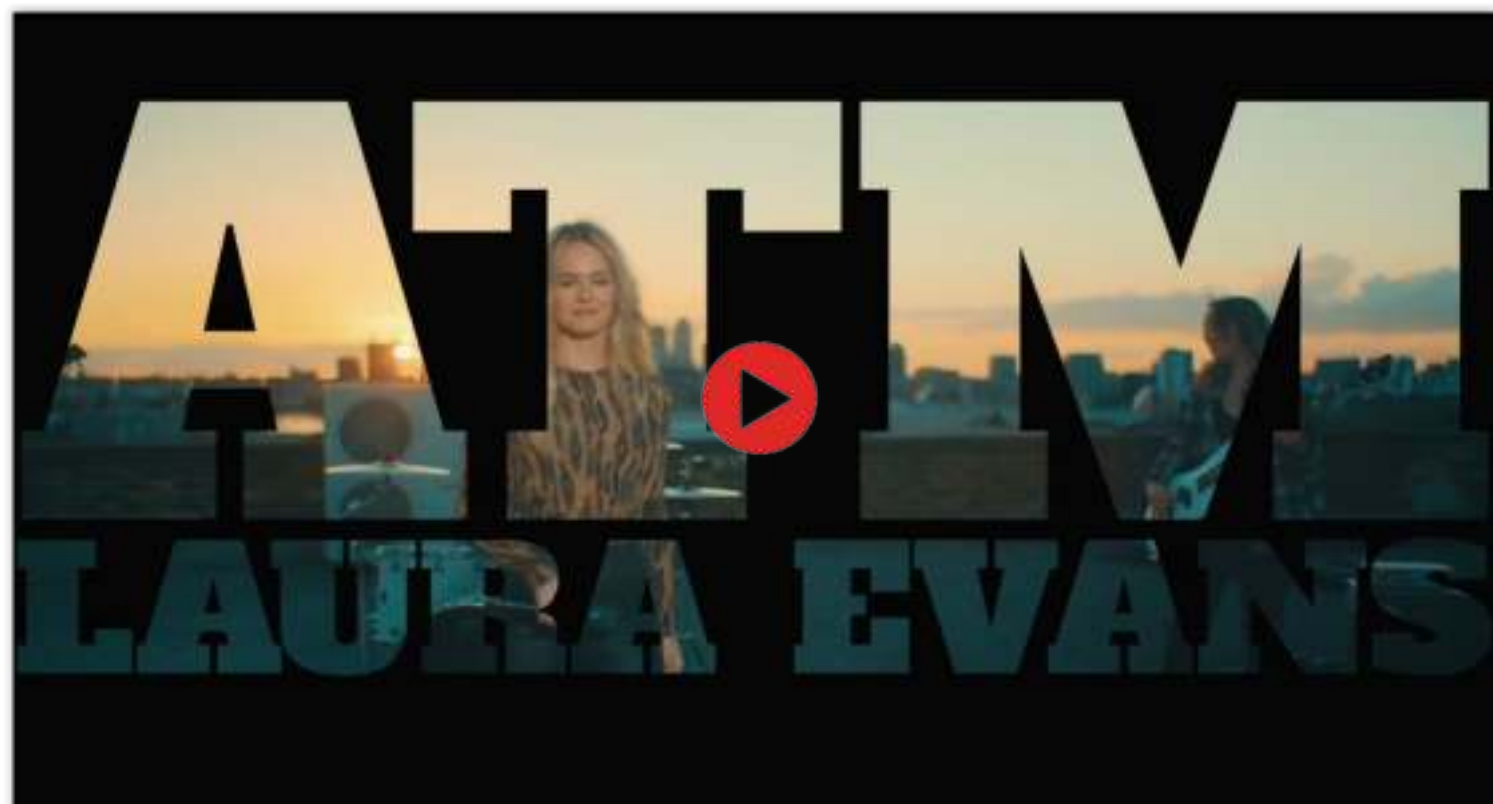
LE: Yeah, I know. Amazing, right? So yeah, that would be awesome. Yeah.

BiTS: [Laughing] I won't take any more of your time, Laura. Thank you very much indeed for speaking to me.

LE: Yeah, thank you so much. Yeah, you're very welcome. Thanks for having me. And yes, send those voice things over, the scripts over and I'll get them done today.

BiTS: I will do. Okay. Thanks for speaking to me. Bye.

LE: Thanks so much. Bye.



With A Little Help From My Friends

Matt Long, singer and guitarist with Catfish and The Revenant Ones died of cancer just over a year ago, after a battle with the disease that showed both remarkable strength and at the same time brought together hundreds of musicians from around the UK who sought to assist in raising funds to ensure Matt's treatment. Recently Matt's family announced that they were working on an album that would be a tribute to him and that involved some stellar musicians and friends.

Ian McKenzie spoke to Fiona Long, Matt's mother and asked her about their future plans:

BiTS: Hi Fiona, if you are ready let's make a start. A couple of weeks ago, you contacted me and told me about an album that was being made as a tribute to Matt Long, your son, who passed away just over a year ago now. I want you to tell me something about how that came about, please, Fiona.

FL: Yes, of course. The initial idea was from a musical friend of ours, Dudley Ross, who has connections with Joe Bonamassa's second guitarist, Josh Smith. Dudley does the tour management for Josh when he comes over to the UK, so they're pretty good friends. And Dudley contacted me and said he thought it would be really nice if Joe performed on one of Matt's songs as a tribute to him. So that was the initial idea, just the one single, one track, and it just occurred to me that we had so much support from the music community for Matt's tribute benefit gigs during the last year of his life, that it would be nice to maybe give an opportunity to some of those people to also contribute.

BiTS: It really was quite amazing how people came together at that time, wasn't it?

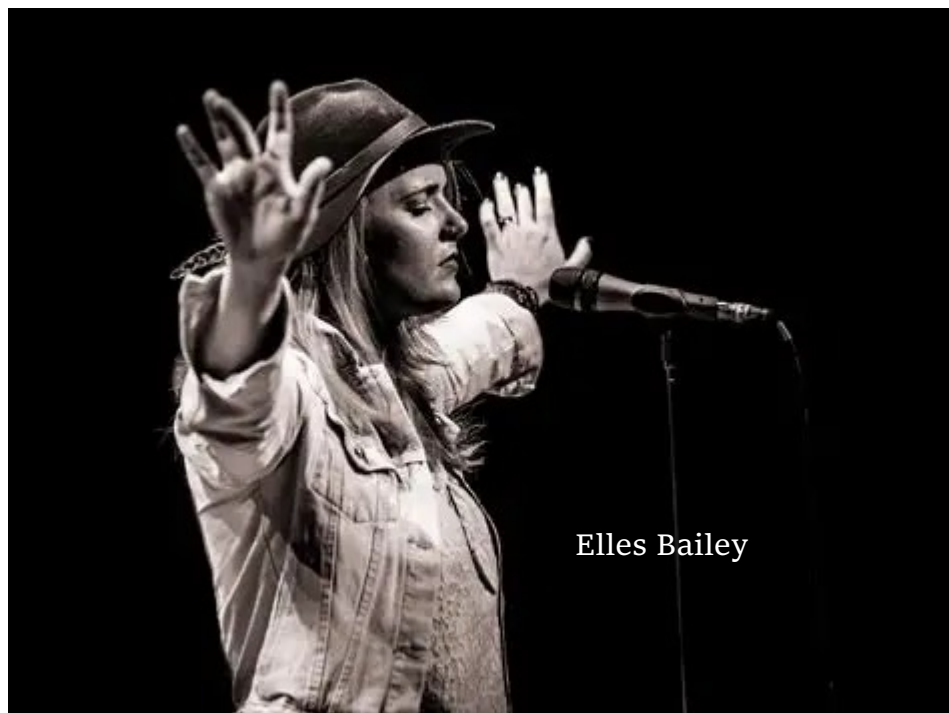
FL: It was extraordinary. I mean, everybody we asked said yes, and they've done it again with this. Each person we've approached has come up with the goods and has produced an amazing track. So we've got a really stellar bunch of people involved, which has been really exciting.



BiTS: Now, I gather that you've got 16, I think you said, tracks for the album. Can you tell me, are they all songs written by Matt and have they been previously recorded, or what's the position about the actual music?

FL: Yes, they're all, apart from one, they're all Matt's original songs. And yes, they're off the various albums, the Catfish albums, or the Matt Long and the Revenant Ones album, which was his slightly heavier project.

BiTS: Yes.



Elles Bailey

FL: So they're all written by him apart from one, which is the title track, 'With A Little Help From My Friends', which obviously, you know, higher up the food chain, that was Lennon/McCartney. At the final benefit gig, that was the encore. So we had The Cinelli's and Brave Rival and Ben Poole on that, and Will Wilde. So that was a really spectacular end to the show and because there were so many people involved in that,

we thought it would be really nice to include that as the closing song and it's also given the name to the album, because obviously, without "A Little Help from My Friends", we wouldn't be able to do any of this album. The support of his friends in the music industry is critical.

BiTS: Well, that answers one question I was going to ask you, and that's the title of the album, but now, I know, don't I [laughs]?

FL: [Chuckles] Yeah, absolutely.

BiTS: Okay. Tell me some of the people that have come forward and what songs they're participating in.

FL: Yes. Well, for example, we've got Elles Bailey doing a version of 'Better Days'. We've got Cinelli Brothers who are doing – what are they doing? 'Hit the Ground Running'. 'Soulbreaker' is being done by When Rivers Meet. 'Exile' is being done by Sean Webster. 'Have My Say', which is off the Revenant Ones album, is done by Zac Schulze. That's incredible. That's like 100 miles an hour. 'Take It All' is being done by Blue Nation. 'Archangel', which is a big, epic, slow track, is being done by Alice Armstrong. 'Up In Smoke' by Brave Rival.

BiTS: What I really want to know is how was this done? I mean, did you do this remotely? Did you send them backing tracks or how did it actually work?

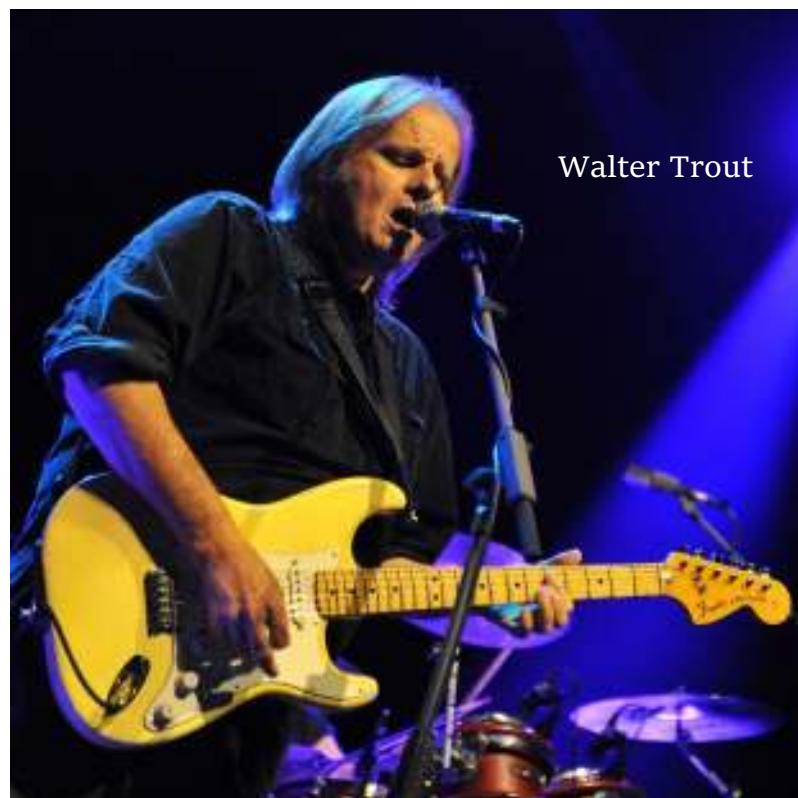
FL: Most of them have recreated it. So basically, I sent them the original track, and, in some cases, I suggested a track to them like with Zac Schulze. He has a particular style, which everything travels at a very high speed [laughs]. So there were a couple of songs that lent themselves very well to his style. I gave him those two and just said, choose whichever one you want to do. But other people had asked, like Alice asked for 'Archangel' because she actually sang backing vocals on the track on the album.



BiTS: Right, right, that's a great idea then. Who is the actual producer of it? Is it you and Paul?

FL: Well, we're pulling it all together with help from Dudley Ross. He's done three of the tracks. He's produced tracks for three of the tracks. And then the various vocalists have actually added their own tracks remotely in some cases. We've also got a guitar solo from Joe Bonamassa and another guitar solo from Walter Trout. So it's lovely to get those two involved because obviously Bonamassa was a massive influence on Matt.

BiTS: Yes, yes indeed.



FL: And he played with Walter several times on stage. So, yes, we were lucky to get them both involved as well. So that was lovely.

BiTS: And the American people, Walter Trout and Joe Bonamassa, I take it that they did their stuff in the States, did they?

FL: Yes, they recorded it and then sent it as a file, so we were able to add it over here.

BiTS: Right.

FL: And some people went into the studio. We've got a friend, Dan Lucas, who runs Joplin House Studios in Kent,

having some colour on this one.

BiTS: If you've got a vinyl album, you've got space for big liner notes. So who's doing that?

FL: Well, Alice Armstrong is doing all the artwork for the cover.

BiTS: Wow!

FL: She's a very good graphic designer. She's designed several things for us, including the "Time To Fly" album cover with the birds. She did that one. But yeah, she's a very good graphic designer. So she's doing the cover art and also a booklet, a lyric booklet, which has all the details and some photographs and so on.



Alice Armstrong

BiTS: The booklet suggests that you're having CDs as well.

FL: Yes, there'll be a booklet with the album as well, with the vinyl.

BiTS: Oh, wonderful.

FL: But also with the CDs as well. Obviously, the CD one will be more pages [chuckles], but yeah.

BiTS: And what are your plans for any financial benefit that you get from this? What's happening to the money?

FL: The money is going directly to the Royal Surrey County Hospital, which is the hospital where Matt was cared for.

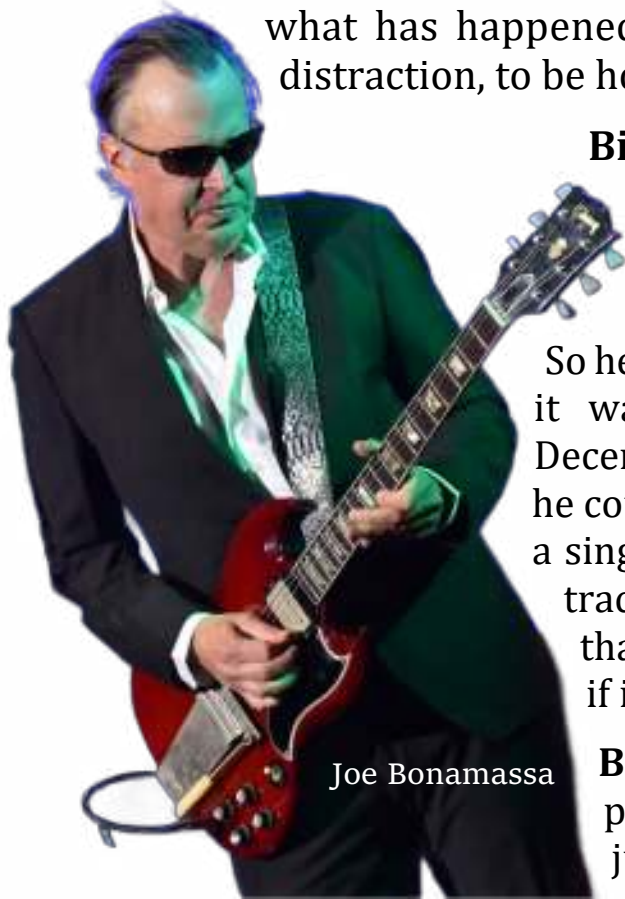
BiTS: How wonderful.

FL: And it's going directly to the cancer unit as well. We've asked for it to go straight to them rather than just into the general pond of the hospital charity.

BiTS: That's absolutely great. Congratulations on doing this. I think it's sensational. But, please tell me something about your feelings about it, Fiona. It must be terribly difficult for you. When it's your son that's passed away, all this adulation is never going to compensate for your loss.

FL: No, it never will. But I think this has helped us get through the last 12 months, really, having this little project. I say little, it's turned into quite a monster project, really. But it's kept me out of mischief really, and it's allowed us to have something

else to think about. Otherwise, we'd be just sitting at home thinking about what has happened. So actually, I've been quite grateful for the distraction, to be honest.



BiTS: One thing that occurs to me as you're talking is that I'm not sure when in relation to his death this actually started. How long after he died?

FL: Not very long, probably about December time. So he died in October and Dudley approached us, I think it was probably end of November, beginning of December, asked would we be interested in doing this if he could set it up? And as I say, at the time that was just a single track with Joe Bonamassa, but the Bonamassa tracks on the album also still has Matt's vocal on it, so that's rather nice that he's able to duet with him, even if it's posthumously.

BiTS: Well, it's been amazing how much stuff, particularly Paul, has been able to resurrect from just little bits on tapes in places.

FL: On the "Time To Fly" album, yeah. That's a different album, obviously.

BiTS: Yes, no, I understand that, but it's amazing what's been put together, shall we say?

FL: Yes, I mean, that really was a labour of love, because that was very, very quickly after Matt died, that he started having to put that together. But it seemed a shame when we'd got halfway through recording, or the guys had, the Catfish guys, had got halfway through recording tracks for the new album and when we were going through Matt's phone, we managed to find various bits and pieces, half-written songs and lyrics and things. So Paul decided rather than just waste that, because some of his stuff was really good, he would finish it, basically. So he took what he could from the recordings and lifted Matt's vocal onto what he had, and then built the rest around that. So it was quite a labour of love, literally, but I think it came out very well.

BiTS: Wonderful, absolutely terrific. And the release, I gather, is on Matt's would have been birthday.

FL: That's the pre-release, so that's when people can start pre-ordering.

BiTS: Okay.

FL: And then the album itself probably won't be out until February, maybe March, we'd think, because we're going to release quite a few singles from it because the tracks are so strong that it's a shame not to showcase several of them, certainly. So the first single comes out on Matt's birthday, which is the 7th of November, and that's also the pre-sale launch.

BiTS: Are there any plans to do videos and that sort of thing?

FL: There will be some videos. I mean, we've got a couple already in, but we won't be doing videos for all of them, no. No, but we may do just sort of short montage, 30 seconds, bits and pieces on release dates for the actual singles, yeah.

BiTS: Now, are you able to say at this stage, for when I produce this article, where people can get the album from?

FL: Yes, my plan is that there will be a special account set up separate from all of our various band accounts, all the people who are involved, and that I will issue a QR code to all the people who are appearing, and they will put it on their website shop, and it will direct people to a separate shop basically, which will deal with just this so that all the money will go into the separate account.

BiTS: Now is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the album? It must be very important to you to be involved in doing this.

FL: Yes, it is. I mean, I want to say a special thank you to Dan, Dan Lucas of Joplin House Studios, because without him, this wouldn't have been possible, quite honestly. And also to Dudley Ross for having the idea in the first place and for producing three of the tracks himself. So those two people in particular, also to Alice for producing the artwork, because there's a lot of time and effort going into that and I really do appreciate everything she's doing. And everybody, by the way, is doing this for nothing, just for the charity, so that there's no cost to me, apart from the actual production of the album and the CD. So, yeah, we're really so grateful, because these people are very, very busy people, you know, touring the UK and Europe, and they still managed to find time to do this for us. So yeah.

BiTS: With Bonamassa and Trout involved it might be a big thing as well.

FL: Well you'd like to think so. If there's any interest from his supporters, then that will reflect in some sales, I hope. But we've got a lot of people here who have a lot of followers. When Rivers Meet have over 100,000 for example. Elles Bailey has a lot. Dom Martin has a lot. So there's a lot of people here who should hopefully bring some sales in, and we'll raise some money for the hospital.

BiTS: Well, fingers crossed. I hope it all goes well and congratulations to you and your colleagues for actually having the nous to do this because I think it's a fabulous idea.

FL: Thank you very much. Thank you..

BiTS: Okay, Fiona, give my regards to Paul, please, and thanks very much indeed for talking to me. It's been absolutely terrific.

FL: Well, thank you for doing it for me.

BiTS: And as they say in the blues world, keep on keeping on.



THE BITS INTERVIEW: BAD TEMPER JOE

Bad Temper Joe is a German artist from Bielefeld, East Westphalia-Lippe. He plays a Weissenborn guitar. He has released eight studio albums since 2014 and was the only European finalist of the International Blues Challenge 2020 in Memphis, Tennessee. He was the winner of the 12th German Blues Challenge 2022. His new album “The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue” is an outstanding production and is reviewed in this issue of BiTS.

BiTS: Let's make a start if you're okay.

BTJ: Yeah, I'm fine.

BiTS: Okay, I want to talk to you in the end about the absolutely terrific music that you produced with your Weissenborn guitar. But tell me, first of all, how did you get into music? Did you start when you were a kid, or what?

BTJ: Well, I was always interested in music already as a kid, but I think I started playing guitar when I was a teenager, maybe 14. I started to play acoustic guitar with the music of Bob Dylan, I learned. A lot of Bob Dylan songs. And after a year or two, I was really into playing guitar. And then I started to learn electric guitar with the music of B. B. King, and that's how it started, I think.

BiTS: Did you have guitar lessons ? Were you taught by somebody?

BTJ: I was taught by my brothers. They showed me a few chords, the A minor chord or the G chord, and then I pretty much learned it all by myself.

BiTS: Okay. How old were you when you started actually playing blues then?



Bad Temper Joe

BTJ: Oh. pretty shortly after, you know, when I started playing electric guitar, I was listening to B. B. King and a lot of the electric blues stuff that we know nowadays, some Eric Clapton stuff. But, yeah, and I think I was... about 18 or 17 when I played my first show, my first concert, I think, at an open mic.

BiTS: That's very good. You were playing solo at that age, were you?

BTJ: Yeah, yeah. Totally solo. And I started writing my own songs pretty shortly after, I think.

BiTS: Who were the artists that you base yourself on, if that's not a rude question?



Who do you find your biggest influence in what you play and write?

BTJ: First and foremost it's Bob Dylan! Then Johnny Cash, and a whole lot of the blues greats — Mississippi Fred McDowell, R. L. Burnside, John Lee Hooker, Mississippi John Hurt, B. B. King, and Freddie King. And of course, some contemporary artists as well. Kelly Joe Phelps, for instance, has had a big influence on my guitar style.

BiTS: You started performing in public at the age of about 18, what sort of guitar were you playing then?

BTJ: I started out playing a regular, inexpensive acoustic guitar in the conventional way. It took me some time before I settled into lap-style playing.

BiTS: When did you start playing dobros or at least resonator guitars and how did you find the Weissenborn guitar?

BTJ: Pretty early on, I bought a simple resonator because I loved hearing all the blues legends play slide. I was terrible at it at first, though, and quickly gave up on bottleneck slide. But slide guitar always fascinated me, and when I discovered Kelly Joe Phelps, I tried his approach — raising the strings on a regular guitar and laying it flat in my lap. That's how I started lap-style playing, about twelve years ago.

Then I got into bluegrass, watched Jerry Douglas and Rob Ickes play dobro, and tried a cheap square-neck resonator. Later, Ben Harper and David Lindley got me hooked on Weissenborn guitars. I tried a basic one first, and it felt right. In 2017, I finally got a high-end Weissenborn, which was a game-changer.

That year I also met Peter Wahl, a luthier in southeast Germany who makes amazing resonators. We became friends, and I've been playing his instruments ever since. But for lap style, it's always a Weissenborn for me.

BiTS: How did you get yours?

BTJ: Over the years, I've played a few different Weissenborns. My first high-end one was British-made and ordered online. It's very close to the original style. I still have it, and most of my slide recordings were done on that guitar. It's definitely pretty beaten up by now.

Since the end of last year, I've been playing a Weissenborn made by Italian luthier Ermanno Pasqualato. His guitars combine the original vibe with modern craftsmanship. I've always admired his work, so I reached out to see if he could build one for me, and he did.

BiTS: What special about that particular type of guitar? Are techniques of playing it different from playing standard slide?

BTJ: It is an all-hollow guitar, from the bottom all the way up to the headstock. That



gives it a unique sound you can't get from a resonator or a regular guitar. When it comes to technique, a Weissenborn is somewhat limited because you're working only with a tone bar and the tuning you choose. Creating different chords can be challenging.

With bottleneck slide, you can fret behind the slide depending on which finger you use, so you can combine fretted notes with sliding notes. For me, the two approaches are completely different. Some things work better on a lap-style guitar, and others are better suited to bottleneck style. At least, that's how I experience it.

BiTS: Please will you tell me something about the albums that you have made. Including the latest one. Any more coming up?

BTJ: Over the years, I've released a number of albums, but the ones I'm most proud of these days are "One Can Wreck It All", "Glitter & Blues", and my latest, "The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue". To me, each of them is completely different. The obvious difference is that the first two feature only original songs, while the last re-imagines classic blues songs. But they also differ in sound and production.

I started out recording solo albums, just me and a guitar. Then I began releasing recordings with my band, like "The Maddest of Them All". On "One Can Wreck It All" and "Glitter & Blues", I combined both approaches, but each album still has its own identity. To me, "Glitter & Blues" is very polished, while "One Can Wreck It All" is grittier and dirtier.

My most recent album, “The Acoustic Blues Guitar Revue”, goes back to basics. It reflects where I’m at right now. I’m always trying to develop as a singer and a guitarist. My previous records featured full-band productions, with overdubs and a bigger sound, but this time I wanted to strip everything back to the roots — just me and a guitar, with the instrument front and centre. I spent time figuring out how to make that work and which songs would suit this approach, and I’m really happy with how it all came together.

Once I finish one record, the next one is always on my mind. To be honest, I already have the songs ready. I might go into the studio this year, but I’m also thinking it might be better to wait a little, refine the songs a bit more. We’ll see what happens!

BiTS: Some of your music I find absolutely delightful is it emotional and filled with skilful delivery both in instrumental and vocally how did you learn to perform like that? Do you listen to a lot of music?

BTJ: Thank you so much for that compliment, it really means a lot! I listen to a lot of music, and for me it’s all about being moved by it, whether it’s a ballad or a rocker. I try to do the same with my own music. I want to connect with it myself, and I want the listener to feel that connection too.

What’s the biggest gig I’ve ever done and what are your ambitions?

BTJ: I’ve done some bigger festivals, which is fun, but I usually love playing smaller venues. I want to perform as much as I can and travel with my music. Whether it’s 50 people or 5,000, if I can reach them through my music, that’s enough to make me feel good on stage. And yes, I might even smile!

BiTS: How about the UK?

BTJ: I would love to come over and play there anytime, but sadly, there aren’t any plans in the near future.

BiTS: Many European artists end up going to America and stay there? Have you got any plans to do that?

BTJ: No, not at all!

BiTS: Have you ever been to America and played there? If so, what was the response? If not, would you like to do that?



BTJ: I've played a few clubs on Beale Street in Memphis a few times, mainly during the International Blues Challenge. The audience response was amazing. Some people said they hadn't heard that kind of music in years, or only from their grandparents, which honestly surprised me. It also feels really good to have listeners who get the lyrics. I had some really fun shows there.

BiTS: If you could choose, what would be the ideal venue you would like to play in?

BTJ: I'd love to play in a cosy listening room or a small theatre for around 250 to 300 people, close to the stage. Dimly lit, so everyone can just sink into the music and the stories. I've done a few shows like that, and they're absolutely magical.

BiTS: The one thing I don't want to know is your real name! I am delighted that you follow the footsteps of all of those people who went by strange stage names like Muddy Waters and Barbecue Bob, Peetie Wheatstraw and many others. What I would like to know though is why you chose the name you use. Can you tell me?

BTJ: I guess the name chose me. Friends always said I seemed grumpy, like I was bad-tempered all the time, even as a teenager. When I started playing open mics, I used my birth name for a few shows, but I switched pretty quickly. Friends were always calling me Joe anyway.

I've always liked the idea of stage names, like Lightnin' Hopkins or Big Joe Williams, and I wanted something that fit me. I went with 'Bad Temper'. It actually helps on stage. Sometimes I don't talk at all or don't smile, and it's fun when the audience tries to make me laugh or catch me smiling. It's like a little game within the show.

BiTS: Thanks for chatting to me Joe

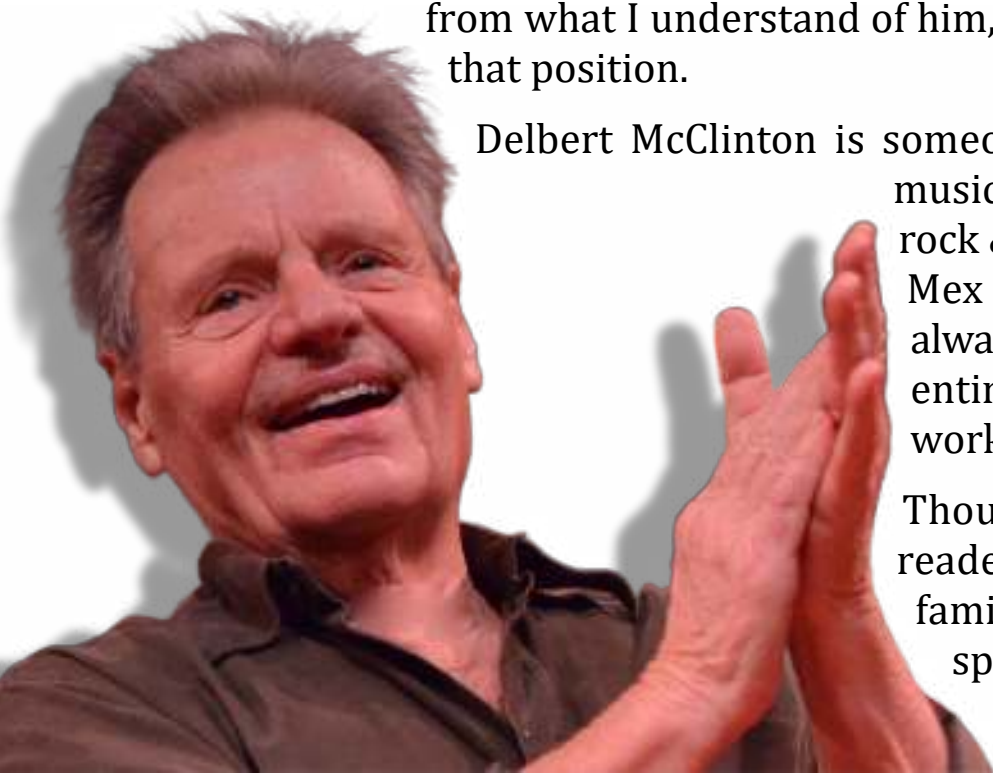
BTJ: Thanks so much for the interview! I really enjoyed your questions. If anything else comes up, just let me know!



Road Warrior - Delbert McClinton

By John Holmes

The term 'musician's musician' generally refers to someone who is highly respected by his or her peers, but who is not that well known to the general public. I would suggest that Delbert McClinton falls into that category, but, from what I understand of him, I think he is quite happy with that position.



Delbert McClinton is someone very hard to pigeon hole musically - he has played and sung rock & roll, R&B, blues, country, Tex Mex and even a little pop, and always with a style and authenticity entirely suited to the genre he is working in.

Though some blues aficionado readers of BiTS might not be too familiar with his work in that sphere, in my opinion he has one of the great blues and R&B voices, and he's no slouch on the harmonica either!

Delbert was born to Herman and Vivian McClinton, in Lubbock, Texas, on 4th November 1940. His Father was a truck driver, and had married Vivian, the 20 year old widow of his close friend, and driver for the same company, Jack, when she was left pregnant and with a 2 year old.

Lubbock, TX, known as "The Crossroads of the West", is famous not just for Buddy Holly, because other talented individuals such as Tanya Tucker, Waylon Jennings and Jimmy Dean were also from the same place. Oddly, between the years 1940 and 1950, Lubbock was second only to Albuquerque, NM, as the fastest growing city in the USA, although it's difficult to see why, in an area of flat dusty landscape.

Maybe it was its position as a crossroads that enabled the city to pick up radio stations from as far away as Chicago, Dallas and Mexico. Consequently there was music everywhere, including from the stores themselves, which often installed speakers to play the music of Hank Williams, Bob Wills and the other stars of the day. According to Delbert, in Lubbock, you either "grow cotton, go crazy or play music. There just wasn't a hell of a lot to do". His early childhood memories of music were of country, Cajun and World War II era songs, his favourites being Charles Brown, Johnny Mercer and Nat King Cole.

His parents were not musicians, but they enjoyed dancing and listening to the music of the day at The Cotton Club, whilst the children played outside in the fields, from where they too could hear the music.

Times were often hard in those days, but his parents never complained, even when his Father had to take a job driving the truck that sucked out septic tanks. However, in 1951 the family moved to Fort Worth, Texas, where his Father had taken a job as a brakeman on the railroad, where two of his brothers also worked. Fort Worth was a boom town, off the back of the oil and military defence industries.

Young Delbert was tuning into as many radio stations as he could find, and became a huge fan of Hank Williams, who was to die tragically only two years later, at the age of 29, as a result of drink and drugs. Delbert enjoyed singing the songs he heard, and had no particular thoughts of performing, but his friends were of the opinion that he should be on stage. One night, in 1953, at a square dance, he was persuaded to do just that, accompanied only by a 78 rpm recording of the song 'Oh Johnny', and it went down so well that Delbert became somewhat of a local child star overnight!

Although this impromptu performance was something of an eye opener for Delbert, the life changing experience happened when a friend of his brother turned up at the house one day with a guitar, and played a Hank Williams song -

"I hung on every single word he said, and watched every move he made. I wanted to learn to play guitar and sing like that as bad as I'd ever wanted anything".

Another friend of his brother also played guitar, and took the time to show the enthusiastic Delbert some chords, and he eventually scraped together \$3.50 to buy a beat-up old Stella guitar - "That old Stella was a piece of shit, but I practiced and learned chords and figured out songs. It was terrible, but man, I loved it"!

By the mid-50s Delbert had discovered Big Joe Turner, Elvis Presley and Bill Haley, and in 1957 he played his first gig - just him with his guitar, at the Big V Jamboree. It was just one song, "Crazy Arms" by Ray Price. Apparently the sound was terrible, but the audience enjoyed it. Later that Summer an aunt and uncle invited him to holiday with them in Florida. Believing that he had some musical talent, they rented a little Martin guitar for him, and entered him in a local talent contest. He must have



impressed, because he went through to the final, and eventually won the \$100 dollar first prize.

He continued to play weekly in the club where he won the contest, and was surprised to be given a card, when he came off stage one night, by a woman from Capitol Records, who asked him to send her a demo.

Back in Fort Worth, he managed to buy himself his own Martin guitar, and put

together his first band, The Mellow Fellows. The band played some restaurants and parties, and eventually found themselves opening for Jerry Lee Lewis, who was on his first visit to Dallas. Although he said they were pretty terrible, and the sound was equally bad, "the crowd didn't know any better. We loved them and they loved us".

They made a demo of "Mean Woman Blues" and sent it to Capitol, and although the band didn't hear from them, the fire had been lit.

The band changed personnel a few times, eventually renaming themselves The Straitjackets, and by

1958 were playing twice weekly shows at the Red Devil Lounge, in Fort Worth. Delbert was often advertised as the star vocalist in the band, although he was also playing rhythm guitar, and beginning to pick up the harmonica (especially after hearing Jimmy Reed).

Their local popularity grew, and soon they were backing the big R&B stars who came through town - Buster Brown, Memphis Slim, Bo Diddley, Jimmy Reed, and many others. Delbert learned a great deal from working with these great black artistes.

By this time Delbert had the responsibility of a wife, who he married in 1959, but later admitted that it was a mistake getting hitched when neither of them knew much about life. His wife worked as a bookkeeper for a natural gas company, and was the main breadwinner. Indeed, Delbert later said "hell, I didn't make any real money until the late 1980s". There isn't much money to be made as a road warrior!

In August 1961 a baby appeared, so Delbert was forced to take a manual labour day job at Stratoflex (they made high pressure hoses for jet airliners) in addition to his music. The job did not last long, nor did those working in a department store, driving a truck or chasing up people who defaulted on their loans.



In November 1961 the regular Straitjackets gig at Jack's Place came to an end when it was burnt to the ground, but they found a new home at the Westmore, and then Skyliner Ballroom on Jacksboro Highway. The following year they beat 200 other contestants in the regional Coca Cola talent competition, and were placed second in the State final.

At the Skyliner they backed Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson (and the strippers!), and they also worked at clubs in Dallas and Fort Worth (some owned or part-owned by Jack Ruby, the killer of Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged killer of JFK).

In Fort Worth, local promoter Bill Smith booked Delbert and the band regularly as session musicians, and it was here that he met Bruce Channel. Although born only 24 days apart, and in the same area, they had never before met, but at one of their first sessions together they recorded 'Hey Baby', featuring the memorable harmonica intro from Delbert, and it was a huge hit, not just in the USA, but also in the UK. Channel insisted that Delbert should be part of his band when he subsequently toured the UK, in Autumn 1962. On a couple of dates in the Liverpool area they were supported by The Beatles, and John



Lennon asked Delbert for some tips on harmonica playing, which he was happy to give him. "The story has been romanticised to more than it was. I didn't teach him. I showed him what I did".

Back in the US, Delbert continued supplementing his music earnings with various daytime jobs, but The Straitjackets needed to move on, because they were top of the heap in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Delbert had realised that he could take more or less any song and put his own convincing slant on it. Unlike other white 'rip-off' artistes, such as Pat Boone, Delbert could sing black music with authenticity.

As a result, The Straitjackets split, and Delbert formed a new band, called The Rondels, who played rockabilly, blues, R&B and country. They soon found a manager and promoter, named Jerry Conditt, who arranged bookings on a wider basis, and a single ('Mathilda' c/w 'Tina') was released on the Shalimar label, which was a local jukebox hit.

Surprisingly, Delbert had written poetry at school, so took to songwriting quite easily, in the style of the music he had been most exposed to - country and R&B. One of his first compositions, 'If You Really Want Me To, I'll G', was released on Smash, and was another local hit. Unfortunately, due to publishing problems, the record was not able

to be distributed nation wide, and thousands ended up dumped in a warehouse. In 1967 it was a country hit for Waylon Jennings!

On the years to 1970 The Rondels released at least 18 singles searching for the elusive national hit, but none were successful.

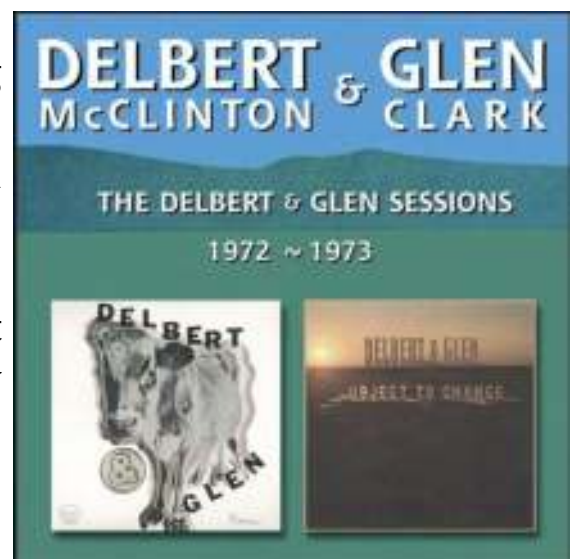


the
RONDELS

The band line-up changed frequently, but they remained a top bar band, albeit without making any real money. So, by the end of the 60s, the band split, and so did Delbert's marriage - "my marriage was shot to hell. Nothing was going right. The way I saw it, I was still doing what I was doing 10 or 12 years before. I wasn't getting anywhere".

Although he was 30 years old, and things were pretty much at rock bottom, the passion to play music had not dimmed, and Delbert formed various short-lived bands over the next few years. However, with a new lady in his life, and the encouragement of old band mate Glen Clark, the two of them packed up their worldly goods and moved to LA, a place where many Texas expatriate songwriters and musicians found themselves. He and Glen initially got a job at a veterinary supply company, but it was a hand to mouth existence, in a dingy rented apartment, and his new lady soon became his old lady, as she couldn't stand that way of life. In his despair, Delbert sat down and wrote 'Two More Bottles of Wine' - in 1978 it was a No.1 country hit for Emmylou Harris, not that he saw any money from it.

Having renewed their musical acquaintance, Delbert and Glen started writing songs together, and teamed up with another Fort Worth musician, T-Bone Burnett, to record a three song demo. Off the back of that, with a great deal of help from independent agent Daniel Moore, they got a deal from Atlantic subsidiary Clean Records, as Delbert and Glen, and a self-titled album was released. Both that, and the follow-up received a lot of interest - critics described their work as very much a Texas record, with all the blended influences, and likened them to a seasoned bar band that was playing mostly original material.



Unfortunately, the musical relationship between Delbert and Glen did not last, in the words of Delbert "we were not very self-disciplined. Our habits were bad, and our work ethic not really that good. We just ran out of gas". With that he moved back to Fort Worth.

In a theme right out of The Blues Brothers movie, Delbert set about “putting the band back together”, and went back on the bar band road, playing for door money. Out of the blue he got a call from an old friend, Charles Stewart, who was now a branch manager for ABC Records, who told him to come over to the studio, demo some of his songs, and he would ensure they were heard by the right people at ABC. He did, they liked it, and a contract was signed.

That contract produced three albums, “Victim of Life’s Circumstances” (1975), “Genuine Cowhide” (1976), and “Love Rustler” (1977). All three contained the classic McClinton mix of blues, R&B, country and some rock & roll, but the music fell between all four stools, so they were not successful - and then ABC went bust!

Having spent some time in Nashville, Delbert, with his new partner (and soon-to-be second wife) Donna Sue, moved to Austin, where the music scene was really beginning to thrive as a melting pot of musicians from all the genres met and played together. Delbert, and fellow Texan Doug Sahm took all the influences, that also included Tex Mex, and played the many clubs around the Austin area, to ever increasing audiences.

In spite of his local success, Delbert and Donna Sue moved back to Fort Worth in 1976 - she wanted to go back home, and he wanted her to be happy.

Two years later, and many road gigs down the line, Delbert did an artist showcase in Nashville, and was picked up by Capricorn Records. As a live performer he was a huge attraction wherever he played, but that had never produced success on vinyl. His first Capricorn album (“Second Wind” - 1978) also featured the Muscle Shoals Horns.



By this time Delbert had some pretty heavyweight fans of his music, including Dan Ackroyd and John Belushi, who credited his band as an inspiration for the Blues Brothers, and recorded his song “B Movie Box Car Blues” on their first album.

In February 1979 the band landed the musical guest spot on “Saturday Night Live”, in which they featured a track from their second, and final, Capricorn album, “Keeper of The Flame”. Once again, the label went bust almost as the record was released.

So Delbert went back to playing the bars, clubs and festivals, this time with the support of a well known artist manager, Don Light, who arranged a deal with Muscle Shoals/Capitol Records. Thinking that he had no original compositions of the right quality, Delbert cut an entire album of covers, entitled “The Jealous Kind” (1980). These included Al Green’s ‘Take Me To The River’, Van Morrison’s ‘Bright Side Of The

Road', and a song from Dallas friend Jerry Williams, called 'Giving It Up For Your Love'.

The family having moved again, this time to Malibu, the marriage did not survive, but the single release of the Jerry Williams song was a hit, reaching No.10 on the Billboard chart, and staying in the charts for 6 months. His second Muscle Shoals/Capitol album ("Plain From The Heart" - 1981) was released, the gigs moved to concert halls, auditoriums and the college circuit, but he was still making little money. It didn't help that Muscle Shoals Sound had a falling out with Capitol, and the label folded.

After the failure of his second marriage, Delbert eventually met Wendy Goldstein, who worked for NBC, and was already a big fan of his. Delbert credits Wendy with taking his career from that of road warrior to a critical and commercial success, as well as sorting out his tax problems. By 1986 she was not only his partner, but also his manager.

Having first appeared on Austin City Limits in 1976, Delbert was back again (for a fourth time) in 1988, and one of the attendees was Lee Atwater, the campaign manager for George W. Bush, the newly elected president. Atwater was a fan of Delbert, and invited him to be part of the all-star blues review inaugural celebration. After some deliberation he accepted the invitation, alongside Etta James, Albert Collins, Joe Cocker, Stevie Ray Vaughan and others. The show was a huge success, and a DVD was released, featuring four songs from Delbert.

In January 1989 Delbert, now married to Wendy, moved to Nashville, and after nearly a decade without a record deal, Alligator released "Live From Austin", which received a Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Blues Album. Subsequently, he signed to Curb Records, and released "I'm With You" (1990), and "Luck Of The Draw" (1992), the latter including a Grammy winning duet with Bonnie Raitt on 'Good Man, Good Woman'.



At long, long last Delbert was, in his own words "rolling some sevens", one of which was a headlining performance at Carnegie Hall in 1994.

In 1997 Delbert's contract with Curb wound up, and he moved to Universal/Rising Tide for the album "One Of The Fortunate Few", which included an all-star cast in addition to his own band. However, once again the label folded straight after the release, so it received no promotion. For a number of years thereafter, Delbert and

Wendy produced his records independently. Those albums, whilst not necessarily being hits, have garnered great reviews, and three Grammy awards.

Since the turn of the 21st century most of his albums have been released on the New West label, and he has continued to tour, although on a lesser basis, recognising his growing years.

However, a regular gig of his since 1992 has been The Sandy Beaches Cruise, an annual music cruise organised by Delbert, Wendy and a friend called Gary Turlington.

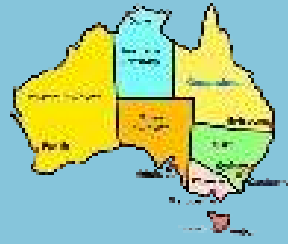
Today, this is still an annual event, and 85 year old Delbert is still belting out his brand of Texas blues/R&B/country/soul. The touring might have slowed, but the passion remains as strong as ever, even after in excess of 60 years as a musician, and he can still hold his own with the young guns.

There are still quite a few Delbert McClinton albums available, of which I would certainly recommend "Live In Austin" as a very good taster - it will give you a taste for more, I'll bet!





A Different Shade of Blue



News from Oz by Frank Davidson

For his radio show in Australia, Frank Davidson interviewed Fiona Boyes about her new album. He started his show with a recorded track from her.



Frank Davidson: This is A Different Shade of Blue on 3WAY FM, and that was Fiona Boyes from an album that was released in 2003, titled “Blues for Hard Times”.

But we thought we'd find out a bit more about her brand new album “[Live at Bluesfest 2004](#)” with a woman I consider to be the happiest woman in the blues. Hello, Fiona Boyes.

Fiona Boyes: I like that. You know, I have been told that I smile too much to be in a blues band, but there you go. I want to play the blues, but I think generally, blues should be about losing your sadness; that is more to my cup of tea.

FD: Absolutely, and every time I've seen you perform, you certainly always get rid of my sadness and make it make it a fun musical set.

It's always a treat to have a chat with you. We are going to talk about live at Blues Fest 2004 and it brings back a lot of fond memories for me. I can imagine what your reaction was when you discovered the long lost tape.

FB: Look, it's quite amazing. I am quite a hoarder, and I have, you know, boxes of memorabilia and various bits and pieces. And over the years, I've had a lot of relocations. I've moved a lot of times, and you know, at one point I've lived in ten houses in eight years in two different countries.



So there was obviously you know stuff that has been in storage anyway for a long period of time.

Last October I relocated to the northern rivers In New South Wales and in the move I went what's in that box and lo and behold there was a dusty mini disc player. So I got it out looked at it and couldn't believe it because it was labelled but I'd forgotten all about it!

It was a live disc tape from the sound board of the first performance at Byron Bay Blues Festival 2004 which was the first iteration of the Fortune Tellers and the first time I put together a touring band and that was done for a tour with Hubert Sumlin, Howling Wolf's guitarist.



So, when I found it, I was, you know, I almost didn't have the heart to listen to it for a couple of weeks because I remembered that as being such a magical tour and such a performance, and it led to it to a friendship with Hubert Sumlin, which I really valued. And I, you know, I didn't want the reality to mar the magic of my memory. But as it turned out, when I listened to it, I was thrilled. I thought the performance had really stood up, and it was wonderful. Given that we have lost both Hubert

and Chris Wilson, who was an incredible mentor to me also.

FD: Absolutely, And how did you first meet up with the late Hubert Sumlin, I mean this is a man that is ranked number 43 on Rolling Stone's 100 greatest guitarists of all time, not to mention his impact on numerous musicians. How did you first make his introduction?

FB: Hubert Sumlin is a very interesting, quite idiosyncratic player. But he's also the guitarist that the people like Eric Clapton and Keith Richards said was the guy for them in terms of his guitar stylings and where he took blues guitar at the time. So yeah, I met Hubert when I picked him up at Melbourne Airport to start this tour. So, and I was quite beside myself because, as someone who was and is a fan of the music first before I became a player. You know, I remember first hearing Howling Wolf, and you know Hubert was a big part of Howling Wolf's ensemble sound.

And you know, I could not believe I was getting to meet Hubert, let alone play with him because originally, this was in 2004, so it came off the back of a huge year for me.

2003 was my first ever visit to America and I performed, competed, and won at the International Blues Challenge, which was a, you know, an incredible experience, but it opened doors for me. And one of the things that happened there was I had jammed with Bob Margolin, who was longtime guitarist with Muddy Waters and I also went back to the

States and toured and made a live album, "Live in Atlanta", which included Bob Margolin. So, originally in the following year, the idea was to get Bob Margolin out and do some tour dates to promote that album and to sort of build on my success from the year before.

And it was like we set all the dates in place. And then we got a call from Bob's agent, saying that there was a scheduling problem and that Bob Margolin was no longer available, to which they casually said, "Would you consider Hubert Sumlin instead"? Oh, oh my goodness! Yes! Yes, you know, so I, yeah, then reject my idea with Bob and put together a band with Hubert in mind and really I couldn't believe it!

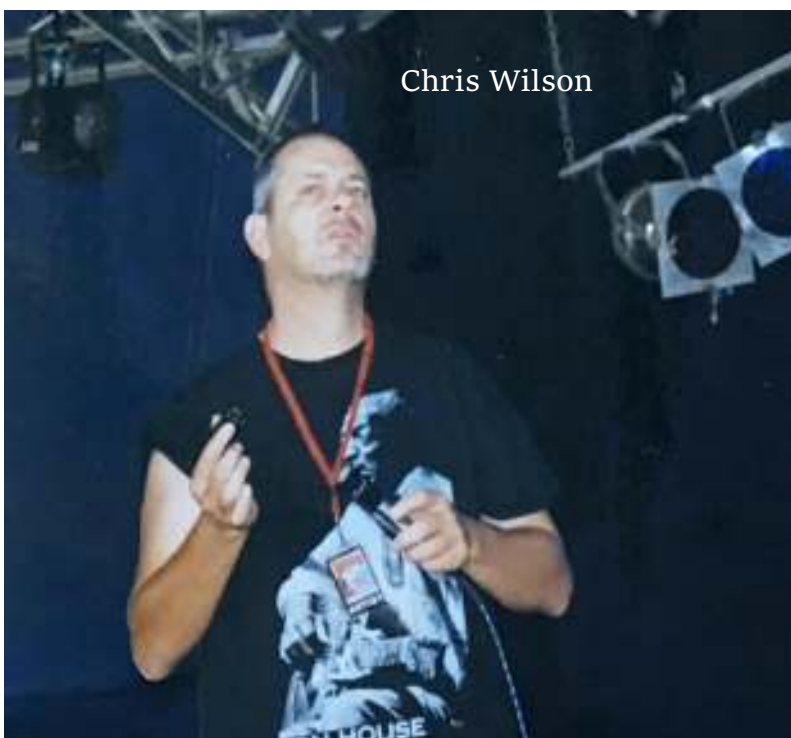
FD: I did not realize that was the first tour ever for the Fortune Tellers, and your first time ever with Mark Grunden on drums and percussion?

FB: It's amazing! I've played with Mark in jamming situations and with the Mojos (my very first band), but on this Live recording actually it is, you know the first Fortune Tellers and Mark Grunden. Twenty one years later he is still my drummer.

So it marks quite a lot of milestones actually for me.

So we had Mark Grunden on drums, Dean Addison on double bass because I had this notion that I wanted to have a dedicated double bass player that would channel Willie Dixon. Because, you know, I've always loved my blues to be very much based on the traditions of things. And I thought, well, I'm going to go for early Chicago sound, you know, with the band, so Dean Addison on double bass.

And then I, well, now that I'm, you know, I had played with Bob Margolin and had a sense of what he did. But now, to be playing with Hubert Sumlin, I thought, well, I have to include some Howling Wolf material. And I, to be honest, my journey playing Chicago blues as a style was at the beginning for me. You know I had a long tradition of playing with the Mojos, which was a band that played more swing and New Orleans-y sort of stuff. And I thought, well, if I'm going to have Hubert, I need to have a harmonica player with someone who can bring some of that Howling Wolf energy to the stage. And who better to ask than vocalist harmonica playing musician, Chris Wilson?



I suppose discovering this tape, apart from the memories of Hubert Sumlin, as well as the memories of Chris Wilson, who we lost in 2019, bittersweet memories of playing with him numerous times.

FD: I saw you several times, and always a powerhouse performance not only from yourself and band but Chris, Like I said, a bittersweet time.

FB: : Well I think in some ways that was part of the reason why I felt it was important to see if I could release this album because given that you know we'd lost Hubert and Chris.

For me they were both really important people in my life you know musically as well as personally. And I remember, particularly with Chris, asking him you know would he consider being involved in the tour. I was very conscious now stepping into the role of a fledgling bandleader in my own right that to hire Chris Wilson as a side man well you know I was really going to have to step up.

And I felt that he was very encouraging and so was Hubert. But that was part of why that tour was, you know, so pivotal for me. And I think, you know, Chris's playing on this recording is just beautiful. There's some really lovely stuff in there. And I'd forgotten, because we were mostly playing electric, but I remembered when I listened to the original mini disc recording, I heard that we had broken it down in the middle of the set and done a handful of tunes in a sort of an acoustic setting. So it was rare because it was just me



and Hubert on acoustic guitars and Chris playing more acoustic harmonica, just through a microphone rather than through the amp. And so there were quite a lot of textures.

You know, I loved Chris's acoustic playing, and he had so many moods, and he drew from such a rich tradition and palette of roots music. And it was also relatively rare for Hubert to play acoustic rather than electric. So, you know, a lot of interesting and lovely things.

FD: Absolutely. And I must say as well too, I remember there's an album of yours I tried to find in my CD collection that you sent me,

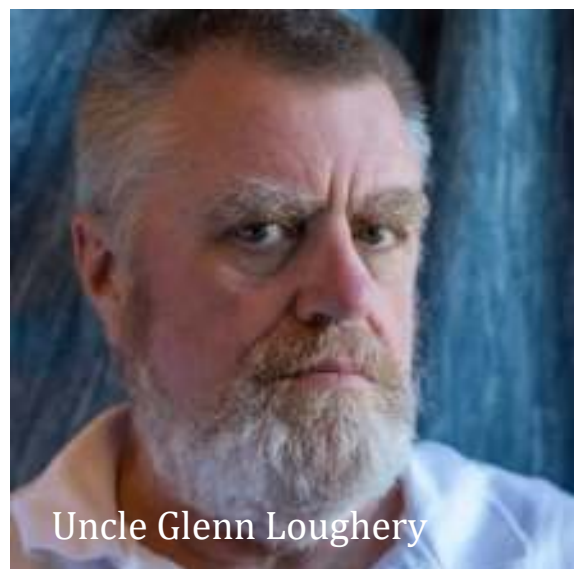
actually years ago, that features Chris Wilson's liner notes, which gave me the inspiration for the program name of A Different Shade of Blue. I cannot remember the album, but I know Chris did the liner notes, and it was your album. So, thank you.

FB: Oh, Frank, you're welcome. You know. That was actually one of the Mojo albums.

You know, The Mojos made a few albums and Chris did the liner notes for—I can't remember which one in particular, but, you know, that was one of the interesting things about Chris.

When I first saw him, I just was not quite intimidated, but you know, he had such a huge presence on stage. But, you know, personally, he was a remarkably interesting, complicated, and thoughtful person. And certainly, there were times as I tried to negotiate different spaces as a musician. I remember the first time I considered trying to self-produce my own recording session, calling Chris for advice, you know, at various times over the years. He could often be notoriously difficult to pin down, but if you, it always seemed like he always picked up the phone when I wanted to ask him some advice. And he was always very thoughtful in his response and immensely helpful.

And so, of course, having found this recording, it was then especially important to me that I got in touch with Sarah Carroll, Chris's partner and her sons George and Finn, for them to listen to it and for them to be happy with me releasing something like that and to also contact BLUESFEST Promoter Peter Noble, (seeing this was recorded off the desk at BYRON BAY Bluesfest), to make sure that all stakeholders were happy with me proceeding. And I think everyone was really encouraging about releasing this recording as a legacy, as an historic legacy, you know, to I suppose extend the legacy of people like Hubert and Chris and their musical body of work. Yes, it's been quite a labour of love.



FD: We all know what it's like moving house, and as you said, you've had several moves, so sometimes you find gems, and you found a fantastic gem with Live at BLUESFEST 2004.

Now, it is officially out now via your website, but you've got a big tour schedule ahead of you as well, and one I noticed that's happening the launch of Blak N Blues with Uncle Glenn Loughery in Hawthorne. What is that all about?

FB: Well yes, I have been busy, so I often have a lot of different projects on the go, and one of the things I have been doing is a collaboration with a [Wiradjuri](#) Elder, (above) who is a poet. We met a little-while back, and I thought he was a really interesting person, an interesting public speaker. He's on the board of a lot of different organizations as well, an interesting guy.

We do this as a bit of a noble experiment; it's like an interdisciplinary, intercultural conversation. We've been doing this collaboration called Blak N Blues, and basically it will be, we'll have a little introduction. I'll play a song, and we kind of talk about the blues as an oral tradition and also the Indigenous perspective as an oral tradition. So if I play a song about something, then Glenn will respond with a little bit of a chat about that thing or that topic and then recite one of his poems that is in that theme or topic. And I found it really interesting, and then quite often in his comments, in his commentary at that point, will spark an idea for one the original one of my own original songs.

So then I'll respond with another song, and so it goes back and forth as sort of a conversation between, I guess, blues with poetry from an indigenous perspective, from Uncle Glenn.

It's a book launch because he had a collection of poetry, some of it in language, or bits and pieces of language and descriptions and stuff. So this is now compiled back into a book, Bina Bira Bina, and there's a longer title in language, but that book, which also has some of his, it's going to be launched tomorrow, and we're doing a performance of Blak Blues as part of that book launch.

FD: They can find out more details on your website but then you're also doing a solo gig on Saturday the 4th at Ffyansford Art Gallery, near Geelong, a nice little funky venue. And then the launch is on Sunday at the Way Out West, with, as you said, Sarah and Shannon Borune.

FB: Yes, that's right. It is an interesting idea trying to launch an album that is a historic release, because clearly normally with a launch you would assemble the band and play. But it kind of can't quite work that way. I had a few tricks up my sleeve, so I wanted to make particularly the very first section of the launch.

FB: We'll have the Fortune Tellers Band, which you know as Tim Neil on Hammond and bass, and recent times he's been playing a lot of sax as well. He is a newcomer, we've only been playing together, what, 15 years or something instead of 21, maybe longer now. But we're going to kick off with everybody. And then I wanted to have someone to represent and give tribute to Chris Wilson. So that's where Sarah Carrol and Shannon Bourne have delightfully agreed to get the celebration started. And then we'll play, actually, some of the songs on the album have gone through incredible different versions over the years. So there will be some songs from the album, but in their current, you know, Hammond trio cigar box forms you know some of these songs.

You know it's interesting when you write a new song to see the journey of different versions and how you can adapt the songs in different ways. And then, of course, there



will be jamming and shenanigans in the second half because we love that. And every time we play Way Out West, you know I will say those folks know how to have a party, and it's always a celebratory gig when we play Way Out West. We'll be looking forward to it.

FD: Fiona, with the tour, it runs through at least until mid-December. And now, being based up north, does that make it easier or more difficult for you and The Preacher to arrange gigs nowadays?

FB: Well, of course, we were based in the Northern Rivers for some years, and we've moved back up there to somewhere reasonably close. So, you know, it's one of those things; all the different places we've lived, you know, you just get along with doing what. you do. Yes, I've worked out I'm getting up my frequent flyer points. My nearest airport is Ballina, and I've worked the best ways of getting in and out of there.

But you know, I think, you know these days I just you just have to factor in the travel to get to wherever you're going. And I've discovered a couple of you know nice places. I'm learning a little bit more again about the region I'm living in and meeting some musicians up there and finding local places to play at. And that's often the places where I can fly myself in or fly the band in. And that's you know always great fun to catch up.

So I'm down south in Victoria and then I'll be back again in a month or so for the Tarra Blues just outside of Wangaratta, as part of the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz & Blues.

And there'll be a couple of shows around that. Yeah, so basically, you know, I think wherever I've lived, there's always been regular pilgrimages back to a Melbourne base, given that you know my band is here. And the funny thing is that, you know, I haven't actually lived in Melbourne now for, I don't know, 15, 18 years. It's been a long time. But, you know, in all the various places I've lived, you know, people often say, where are you

from? And I'll go, well, I'm from Melbourne, but right now I'm living wherever I am. So I do feel, you know, deeply Melbournian, even though it's been a long time since I've actually lived at home.

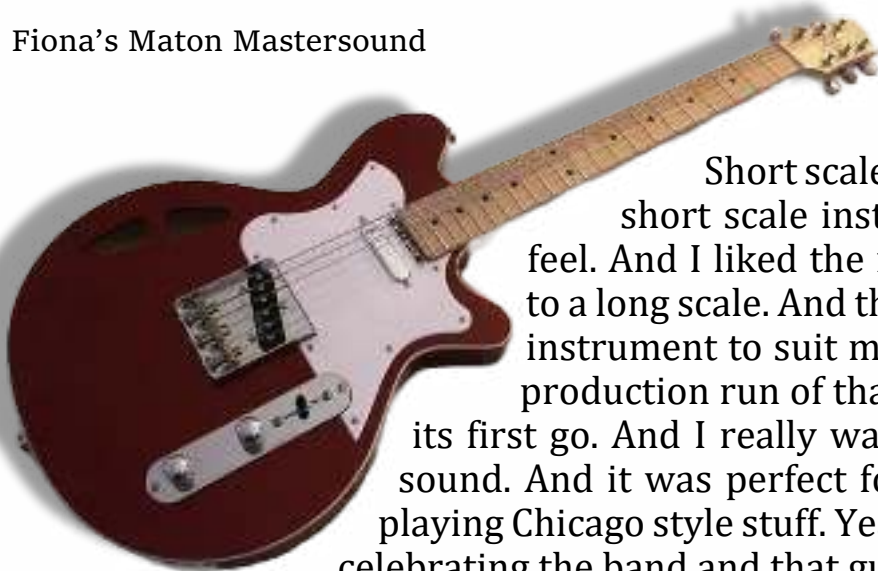
FD: Well, that's good. I better let you go because I know you've got a busy schedule, getting things organized and getting on the plane and whatnot.

And before I let you go though I must say happy 21st to your trusty Maton Master Sound guitar, made especially for you in Maton Melbourne factory, It just turned 21 years of age.

FB: Yes. You see, when I started to join all the dots I thought, well, 2004 that was the first time I put together the Fortune Tellers as a touring band for a tour. It was the first time that I used my trusty Maton Master Sound, which is my favourite and constant touring companion; that was its first outing too.

The funny thing was I'd always played, or generally played a Telecaster, and I love Teles and I've got some beautiful Teles. And when Maton built that guitar for me it was I was really like I don't need another electric guitar I've got a Telecaster I don't need that. And so in the end, I said, well, why don't you make a guitar that does something very different? And what I love about the Maton Mastersound, it was maybe the first one they built as a long scale instrument. They were originally designed as a short scale instrument. And

Fiona's Maton Mastersound



when I went in to test drive it as an idea, I went, I didn't like the feel of it.

Short scale, for those guitarists listening, at the short scale instruments got a more bendy kind of feel. And I liked the rigidity. So that was a custom build to a long scale. And then they made various tweaks to the instrument to suit me which then ended up leading to a production run of that style sound. But yeah, so that was its first go. And I really wanted something that had a meatier sound. And it was perfect for playing in a small ensemble and playing Chicago style stuff. Yeah, so that's been, yeah, the 21 years celebrating the band and that guitar and this historic recording.

FD: : Well, you've reached adulthood as they say.

FB: Yes, the key to the door. Yeah, that's right.

FD: Fiona, it is always a pleasure to talk to you. Your tour schedule is on. your website at FionaBoyes.com and you can find out all the details and pick up a copy live at Blues Fest 2004.

FD: Best of luck with the launch Fiona. and many thanks for your time and the music on this morning on A Different Shade of Blue on 3WAY FM.

FB: Thank you Frank, for your support and I hope to see you soon.



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REVIEWS



Tom Hambridge—Down The Hatch—Quarto Valley Records

Lead vocalist, drummer, producer, songwriter and arranger, Tom, has recently released his follow-up album 'Down The Hatch', to his much lauded 2023 album 'Blu Ja Vu' on the Quarto Valley Record label.

The musicians joining Tom in the studio on the twelve original compositions are; Tommy MacDonald & Anton Nesbitt on bass, Glenn Worf; upright bass, John Lancaster, Mike Rojas, Noah Forbes and Jimmy Wallace; keyboards, Kevin McKendree; piano, with Tim Lauer on accordion.

The opener is 'Willie Dixon's Gone', is an inviting, fast, punching, hurtling, guitar driven steamroller. 'Every Time I Sing The Blues', is a more thoughtful, slower piece, with gently calming guitar and mellow keyboards asking, why sing the blues?

'I Want You Bad', is a seriously foot-tapping, swinging, good time guitar wailing, Chicago rolling blues. 'How Blues is That', is a lazy, evocatively tramping and prowling, guitar wailing Chicago blues.

On 'Hard Times', echoing pain-filled guitar, and trudging percussion, emphasises the list of woes. 'What Does That Tell You', is quite simply a joyful, piano and guitar led blues rocker.

'Believe These Blues' is a tale of sorrow, pain and death, wrapped in, warm mellow, enticing guitar. 'Making Lemonade', is a sweetly soothing, Cajun accordion and guitar fuelled rockabilly foray.

'What Might Have Been', mellow, wistfully bubbling guitars and organ drives this tale of, what if? The seriously foot-tapping instrumental, 'You Gotta Go Through St. Louis', is a piano led rocking ode to the one and only Chuck Berry, featuring Buddy Guy on guitar.

The jolly, country blues influenced 'Start Drinking Early Day', is most definitely, an ode to the pleasures and dependence on alcohol.

The breezy, inviting, rolling and enquiring 'I Wanna Know About You', has an engaging burring, ringing guitar feel.

Recommended!

Brian Harman



BB & The Bullets—High Tide—Dixie Frog

After New Zealand musician and producer Brian Baker, vocals and guitar, returned home from Australia he joined Brad McMillan; drums and Stu Duncan; bass, forming the trio B.B. & The Bullets. Eddie Rayner, from Split Enz and Crowded House, provides keyboards.

Together, they have released their debut album on the French label Dixie Frog. Recorded in Whanganui, NZ at producer and band leader Brian's Nixon Street recording studio. The twelve numbers are a combination of covers and originals. The rocking opener 'Something In The Water', contains echoes of Free.

Albert King's 'Born Under A Bad Sign', feisty, slightly rocking pace invitingly draws you in. The dramatic, rocking, 'High Tide', is a tale of a farmer pitted against the impending deluge of the natural course of a river. On Bo Diddley's 'I Can Tell', the infectious, slow guitar entices you in.

The slow shoulder-swinging blues of 'Seven Ways To Sin', explains exactly how enticing his girlfriend is. Rufus Thomas's 'Walking The Dog', is transformed into an appealing, strutting rocker. The grooving 'Little Fishes' is about how we all get our day to shine. On The Beatles' 'I Want You (She's So Heavy)', the band succinctly maintains its infectiously heady, moody melancholic blues magnetism.

On 'Letting Go', the bass creates a splendid swaying atmosphere of pessimism on a reluctant lover's willingness to say goodbye. The band continues to exude the richness and warmth of B.B. King's 'The Thrill Is Gone', in its reluctance to emotionally let go.

The instrumental 'Brian's Boogie (Hurry Home)', features lovely enticing, fluid guitar matched with well paced punchy percussion. Finally, 'Big Foot Running', comes with pounding percussion, fluid guitars, dream time dramas and disasters, all written in the night sky.

A very fine debut!

Brian Harman



Manu Lanvin—Man On A Mission—Gel Production GEL61CD0010

Fifty one year old, French bluesman Manu Lanvin, is the son of the highly regarded actor French Gérard Lanvin.

Over the course of seven albums, Manu has become a driving force in French blues-rock. In 2014, he represented France at the 2014 International Blues Challenge in Memphis and won the 2015 Cognac Blues Passions Prize.

This thirteen track album was recorded in Paris, Nashville, Montreal, Fort Lauderdale, and Sheffield.

The opener, 'Just Need Me', is an enticing, loping, jangling, shuffling rumble. 'I Can't Get Enough of you', is a poppy/rocking plea for love or more mistreatment? Whereas 'Did U See Judy?' is a breezy upbeat, hand clapping, bubbly keyboard and guitar number with echoes of a stabbing reggae bass line. On 'Change My Ways' a wailing guitar, hurting horns and popping organ punctuates, a lamenting tale of unfaithfulness. A sorrow filled foot-tapping 'I Got the Blues' enticingly entwines a blues piano with a touch of hip-hop and vinyl scratching.

'Savigny-Sur-Orge', is a sad ballad, with sympathetic guitar, piano and horns. While, 'What's The Matter With You?' is an upbeat, searing organ filled rocker.

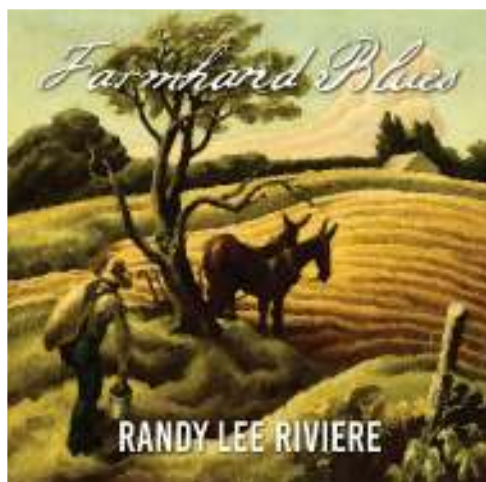
'Saving Angel', has an enticingly rolling, honky tonk piano and a slipping and sliding guitar. Towering horns, introduces the heartfelt ballad 'I Don't Wanna Say Goodbye', as rolling piano and guitar entwines with emotion, Manu's raw, raspy vocals suit the mood.

The questioning 'Could It Be Love', introduces a breezy European feel, with rustling backing vocals and insistent guitar adding to the emotion. 'Make it Right', is quite simply a goodtime piano, guitar and hand clapping foot-tapper.

'Man On A Mission', is a strident, percussion fuelled guitar rocker filled with purpose and finally, 'Une Nuit', is a lazy, hazy French lyric number with a sweetly tender nostalgic feel (I think?).

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Randy Lee Riviere—Farmhand Blues—Wilderness Records

In the past, Randy equally divided his twin passions: music in Nashville and the Montana wildlife, now as a retired wildlife biologist, he focuses solely upon his music.

Here, with this new album he continues his recent collaborations with Producer and Drummer Tom Hambridge. Joining Randy, vocals, guitar, are guitarists; Doug Lancio, Bob Britt, and Michael Saint-Leon (also on harmonica), Mike Rojas; keyboards, and Robert Kearns; bass.

The music is mostly whisky soaked, rocking Americana and blues, 'Downtown', is scorching, guitar laden mid-paced rocking tale of Saturday night good times.

The prowling 'Big On A Bender', explains the possible perils, such as; going to the toilet when handcuffed by the police.

The foot-tapping, rolling, 'Farmhand Blues', explains the backbreaking hardships of working the Californian land.

The mellow, sweet guitar and vocals on 'Birdwatchin'' amply illustrates the benefits of being an ornithologist, whilst the burning, burring fuzz-guitar on 'Alabama' leans enjoyably into Americana. 'Linden Lane', is a lyrical, sentimental southern tale of age, manners and hardiness.

A sleazy slide drives 'Moonlight' recalling a tale of two people enjoying a single night of passion and a prowling 'Cynical', pleasantly mixes psychedelic guitar work with a slow burning slide.

Another slow burner is 'If I Were King', which mixes, soul searching and slide guitar. 'Mother Lee', introspective, swirling, guitar laden emotional confusion.

'December 1980' is a mournful, shuffle upon the demise of John Lennon and 'You Ain't No Loving Woman' is a burning ballad, recounting the emotional effect of shallow love. 'Pecos' is a country rocker focused on the cowboy and his faithful, trusty steed. A true cowboy love.

'On My Way On Down', is a burning, wailing tale of a life sinking to its lowest and 'Dovetail Joints' is a gentle, slow paced guitar piece which salutes the ignored, honest, industrious working-class.

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram—Hard Road—Red Zero Records ASIN: B0FD8H7QLC

This is Christone's third album and it is again produced by Tom Hambridge, with Christone, Tom and Richard Flemming writing most of the tracks. Opener 'Truth' is a funky autobiographical song with him saying that he wants to go his own way – "I don't care what you call it, as long as it feels good"! 'Bad Like Me' and 'S.S.S.' are both very rocky with processed lead guitar but 'Nuthin' But Your Love' slows things down, it's like a cross between modern R&B and country. 'Crosses' and the following 'Voodoo Charm' are both more bluesy and with very Hendrix-like guitar interludes.

'Clearly' is another laid-back song, a mix of soul and gospel with some lovely organ from Marty Sammon and with Christone's confident, authoritative vocals, while 'Standing on Business' is one of the album's real highlights, it's catchy with a 'perky' rhythm – again more modern R&B than blues. It's back to funk with 'Hard to Love' but with fine blues lead guitar from Christone and we finish with 'Memphis' an acoustic blues with just Mr. Ingram's guitar and vocals, together with nice harp from

Harrell 'Rell' Davenport. Although this album is another small step away from straight blues, in truth it's pretty much similar to his previous albums with Christone showing that he has the chops to play blues, rock and modern R&B and equally his singing is at home in any genre. As well as Marty Sammon (keyboards) the band here is Tom Hambridge (drums), Kenny Greenburg (guitar), Glen Worf or Tom MacDonald (bass) and Tom's daughters Sarah and Rachel (backing vocals).

Graham Harrison



**Mud Morganfield—Deep Mud—Nola Blue Records
ASIN: B0FG5832X2**

This is Muddy Waters' eldest son Larry 'Mud' Morganfield's latest album recorded in Chicago and produced by Studebaker John who also plays harp on ten of the fourteen tracks and according to Mud it's "All Chicago blues – no rock blues here." Good man! We kick off with 'Bring Me My Whiskey' and 'Big Frame Woman' two Muddy-style songs, while 'Strange Woman' is a mournful slow blues as featured by his father.

Then suddenly 'She's Getting Her Groove On' is apparently a live track (?) with a brass section led by Phil Perkins (trumpet), while 'Ernestine' is a powerful track with fine harp and built on rolling piano from Roosevelt Purifoy. Other band members are Rick Kreher and Mike Wheeler (guitars), Sumito Ariyo Ariyoshi (keyboards), E. G. McDaniel (bass) and Melvin "Pooky Styx" Carlisle (drums).

'Strike Like Lightning' is a slow blues, 'Cosigner Man' has brass and backing vocals, before 'Lover Man' gets us back to classic Chicago blues with Studebaker John's harp leading the way, while 'In and Out of My Life' is a mellow, reflective song with tinkling piano and backing vocals. 'The Man that You're With' seems like an attempt to replicate a classic Muddy Waters sound and for me it failed because the slide guitar wasn't quite good enough.

However, an actual Muddy song 'Country Boy' is delivered superbly – wonderful harp from John and also vocals from Mud. You could say that we've heard this all before and that Chicago blues has moved on since the 50/60s – and you'd be dead right! However, for me The Muddy Waters Band was the apogee of ensemble blues playing, with its wonderful interplay between the rhythm section, guitars, piano and harmonica and Mud and the band do a good job in capturing that here, with Mud's voice in particular capturing his father's authority and menace.

Graham Harrison



Blood Brothers—Help Yourself—Gulf Coast Records ASIN : B0FBX6WPKD

This is the second album from Blood Brothers - Mike Zito and Albert Castigilla – recorded live in the studio in St. Louis with a band of Lewis Stephens (keyboards), Scot Sutherland (bass) and both Matt Johnson and Ray Hangen (drums). I’m not a big fan of blues rock but I have a soft spot for Mike Zito who I find is both a very emotional guitarist and singer and Mr. Castigilla also plays his part on the album as does the band. We blast

off with the title track and ‘Can’t be a Prophet’ but then ‘Alive’ slows things down, it’s a soulful ballad with Mike’s heartfelt lead vocals and then everything steps up a gear for the solo. ‘Soulard Serenade’ is a jazzy instrumental with the two guitarists trading off each other and even adding some twin lead guitars à la Allman Brothers/Wishbone Ash and there’s also some nice organ playing.

JJ Cale’s ‘Low Down’ is beefed up into a Stones-style rocker with both men singing in unison, while ‘The Best I Can’ is bluesy funk with some nice guitar backed up with soulful organ and Mike’s testifying vocals – standout track? Then comes ‘Prove My Love’ – more unison guitar playing and passionate vocals from Mike before another rocker ‘Ol’ Victrola’ which celebrates the joy of vinyl. ‘Running Out of Time’ is a bluey rocker and Albert’s ‘Do What You Gotta’ closes the album, it’s an easy rolling rocker with slide guitar and built on Mr. Stephens’ barrelhouse piano.

I’d say that for me this isn’t quite as good as the first album but it’s a very solid effort, built on their touring together to promote the previous album and you can clearly hear that everyone is totally bedded in together, with the rhythm section with its two drummers solid as a rock.

Graham Harrison



Kara Grainger—That’s How I Got to Memphis—Red Parlor Records ASIN : B0FPGG6TXB

Kara Grainger is Australian but has been based in the States for a number of years, first on the West coast but now in Nashville but this her latest album was recorded in Memphis’s Royal Studios under the direction of Boo Mitchell (Willie’s son).

We begin with the smouldering soul of ‘Texas Blues’ with its restrained brass and the Hi rhythm section with Charles Hodges (organ) and Leroy Hodges (bass) with

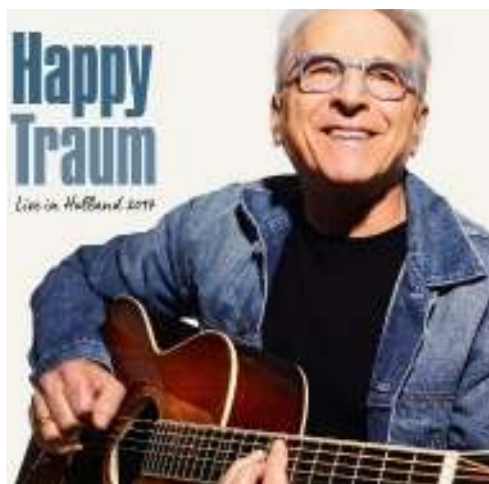
Kara’s vocals and subtle guitar chops. Tom T. Hall’s oft recorded title track is handled well, it’s a restrained version with Kara’s soulful vocals supported by backup singers, the moody original track ‘Light Your Fire’ features Kara’s electric slide guitar, while

'Wake Up with You' is a laid-back soul ballad with prominent organ from Mr. Hodges and subtle lead guitar from Kara.

'Mama Said' ups the pace with more organ in the 'Green Onions' mould and Kara shouting out the lyrics and adding a slide solo, then she covers an Ann Peebles song 'Love Played a Game' with riffing brass and backing vocals and this is followed by another cover The Meters' 'Doodle Loop' a funk fest, complete with wah-wah guitar and Kirk Smothers baritone sax. 'Same Old River' has Kara singing over her bluesy slide guitar and bubbling electric piano and organ and we close with 'Lessons' a rather slushy melodic ballad with strings.

I've been impressed with Kara's guitar playing and singing in the past but was a bit disappointed by this album – it does sound great with all the elements of the Hi Records sound but it's not what I expect from Kara and I would have liked to have heard her cutting loose more, on both guitar and vocals. I don't know whether she was overwhelmed to be recording in Royal Studios where some of her heroes had recorded or if she and Boo had set out to record a subtle, restrained evocation of the Hi sound but for me it was all a little too laid back.

Graham Harrison



**Happy Traum—Live in Holland—Strictly Country
ASIN : B0FCYSF9NT**

Happy Traum was one of a group of folk singers who were around in the early 60s in New York along with Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs etc. Happy took guitar lessons from another New York resident Brownie McGhee and he includes two of Brownie's blues songs on this live album recorded in Holland in 2017 – 'Pawn Shop Blues' and 'Sporting Life Blues'.

We also get a mixture of folk and blues songs with just the 79-year old Happy singing and playing guitar - his guitar playing is still dextrous and his voice strong on numbers like 'Careless Love' and Norman Blake's 'Church Street Blues'. Also, as well as folk songs like 'The Water is Wide' and 'Danville Girl' he also includes his old associate Bob Dylan's 'Buckets of Rain'.

Happy continued to perform into his 80s and to teach via his Homespun Music Instruction and this album is a nice memorial to a fine artist who passed away last year at the age of 86.

Graham Harrison



Angelique Francis—Not Defeated—Independent

Angelique Francis is a singer and multi-instrumentalist from Ottawa, she's already won lots of Canadian blues awards and after starting young was playing on the same bills as Buddy Guy, Shemekia Copeland and Gary Clark Jr. by the age of 14. The album starts with 'Sugarcane Jukebox' a sexy strut with Angelique's vocals and harmonica, 'Escape' features wonderful blues lead guitar from Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram which perfectly complements Angelique's wonderful vocals and Eric

Gales drops by to add his guitar to 'Train Coming', again he plays very well but he's perfectly matched by the rest of the track. This is an excellent album, it's definitely blues but with contemporary accents and it is also very accessible with lots of variety. As well as singing Angelique plays bass, guitar, keyboards and harmonica and is joined by her sisters who make up a brass section, her father on drums and Dave Williamson (electric guitar). Definitely one to check out for an imaginative modern twist on the blues.

Graham Harrison



The Lowdown Saints—Hard Player—Independent

The Lowdown Saints are a Swedish blues band with the tremendous harp playing of Gustav Almstedt upfront and this album is compiled from tracks recorded during the last four years. As well as Almstedt the band are Tommy Moberg (drums, lead vocals), Hannes Mellberg and Felix Mathiessen (guitars) and Urban Hed (bass). Apart from one cover of Big Walter Horton's 'Need My Baby' the songs here are all originals, we blast off with 'Good Stuff Boogie' a powerful rocker, 'Pusherman' is a

funky blues with nice lead guitar and 'It Takes 2 To Play the Game' has a Bo Diddley groove. 'Evertina' is a catchy, melodic harp-driven song with additional piano (Daniel Karlsson), 'Got No Time for Love' is a guitar boogie and 'Help Me Lord' again benefits from boogie piano from Karlsson. 'Baby Please Come Home' is a jump blues and we also get a bonus version of 'Got No Time for Love' this time with added harp. The Lowdown Saints are perhaps most like early Fabulous Thunderbirds and you can imagine them going down really well at festivals.

Graham Harrison



Jimmy Burns & the Soul Message Band—Full Circle —Delmark 891

(www.delmark.com)

This is a really rather impressive release from the Dublin, Mississippi-born younger brother of Detroit bluesman Eddie Burns; he has himself been a recording artist since the 60s, after he moved to Chicago at the age of 12, most often working as a soul artist, but as this album proves, things are never quite that simple. Jimmy has been making blues/ soul albums for Delmark since

1996 – this, his sixth for the label, is a little different from its predecessors though.

It goes without saying that Jimmy is an excellent singer. On this set, he has teamed up with Hammond organist Chris Foreman and his band for a set that may recall to older listeners the funky club sound of the likes of Jimmy McGriff and Jimmy Smith. But, there's also a strong singer right out front tackling blues such as 'Rock Me Mama' and Big Joe Turner's 'World of Trouble' (both favourites of young Mr. Burns), R&B with a cover of The Five Royales' 'Too Much Lovin'', classic soul-styled material such as 'Give Her To Me', and some original and excellent borrowed material such as the super-catchy, funky opener, Charles Wright's 'Express Yourself'.

There is jazz and soul-jazz in there too, and the band get the opportunity to stretch out themselves on a couple of instrumentals – the cool groove of 'Ain't That Funk For You' and Buddy Johnson's 'Since I Fell For You', the latter featuring some very particularly impressive sax playing. If you like the sound of this release, do investigate. Albums in this style – or of this quality – don't come along too often.

Norman Darwen



Kyshona—Legacy/ Live from the Blueroom Studios— Must Have Music

(www.kyshona.com)

Kyshona (Armstrong) is an African-American singer, guitarist and songwriter based in Nashville. She begins this set by introducing herself to the audience, giving a family tree stretching back many generations. It certainly makes an impact; it is a powerful statement in itself (if you read the book or saw the television programme "Roots", you may recall writer Alex Haley's difficulties in

his efforts to find out his family's history).

But then again, the whole set is, subtly, extremely powerful. It is an acoustic offering, folksy at times, with several backing vocalists echoing her words gospel-style. If you

want to hear something bluesy, then try 'Waiting On The Lawd', and the blues can be heard in most tracks, even if it is not the main element.

Really though, the title explains what this set is all about, with Kyshona proving how resilience and deep roots have indeed created a strong legacy and identity for her in what has often been a hostile environment. Think maybe Sweet Honey In The Rock for an influence – and perhaps not just musically - but really just listen to it for what it is: an honest and personal statement, an affecting and inspiring release.

Norman Darwen



Laurence Jones—On My Own—Ron (Single)

(www.laurencejonesmusic.com)

Laurence has been battling health issues recently, so it is good to have this solo single from him, the first from an album of the same name due for release in January next year. It features the UK blues-rocker alone with an acoustic guitar on a fine downhome, bluesy groove. Even the label reflects the title as it is Laurence's own. Laurence sings warmly and well, and the guitar work has elements of Mississippi blues and the lyrics reflect

Laurence's own approach and have some traditional phrasing. It certainly bodes well for the album!

Norman Darwen



Blues Menu—25 Lat Na Scenie: Koncert Jubileuszowy—Independent

(www.facebook.com/bluesmenupl/)

Translated from Polish, the title means "25 Years On Stage: The Jubilee Concert".

It is a live recording from 2023 and presents a fine, accomplished band (formed in 1998, of course), with ten original blues numbers, all sung in Polish. It does work well, and the song titles seem to suggest more or

less traditional themes (thanks, Google Translate!). I don't have a clue what the in-between song banter means, but the audience appreciate it.

The music itself is fine – I originally thought the band must be a five piece as the voice and harmonica are so closely aligned, but no, it's six members. Song-wise, 'Na Mnie Juz Nie Licz' is a Chuck Berry influenced rocker, 'Bluesmana Los' sounds like early seventies Rolling Stones (nice slide guitar by Gustaff), and 'Mama Miala Racje'

rides a raucous blues harp-dominated backing - Orzel blowing like crazy here. 'Jak Ten zZZ Top' translates as 'Like This One From ZZ Top'—so no prizes for noticing there's a certain blues-rock strut to this.

'Jak Pies We Mgle' is a very successful, slow, moody Chicago blues number, whilst 'Poległem Na Milosci' ('I Fell In Love') is Muddy Waters flavoured, though the equally impressive 'Cztery Zwrokti O Samotnosci' has a more modern blues sound.

So OK, maybe you might think this might be a little out of your comfort zone, but do try to check these guys out. They have a fine sound and good songs (as far as I can tell). I might not speak Polish, but I do like good blues, and this is certainly that.

Norman Darwen



Travellin' Blue—No Gooder—Naked (Digital Single) (www.facebook.com/reel/4421525408078810)

This Belgian five-piece band have featured in these pages before, including in their earlier incarnation as The Travellin' Blues Kings.

Here they go for full-out blues-rock on this four-minutes long single release. There is a grinding, rather menacing rhythm, with some distinctive guitar work – even almost bordering on atonal playing – by Luke Alexander, and a suitably strong vocal from JB Biesmans.

There is something of a retro feel – seventies maybe – but overall this does sound like a contemporary performance. Yes, you have to go for blues-rock, but if that is your bag, do certainly investigate!

Norman Darwen



Fiona Boyes and the Fortune Tellers—Live at Bluesfest 2004—(2025) Fiona Boyes & The Fortune Tellers

<https://fionaboyes.com>

Fiona Boyes has been a vital and integral part of the Australian music scene since her beginnings as a founding member of the all-female blues band, The Mojos.

Capturing the hearts and minds of audiences with her unique blend of blues and roots backed by an impressive discography of 16 releases, (including two with The Mojos) Fiona has made and continues to make her mark as a Queen of the Blues wherever she performs.

As Hubert Sumlin himself once said, "...she's got it. I've played with all of them, and she's got it!"

The year 2025 saw the release of a mini disc (marked Blues Fest 2003) uncovered, in between shifting locations and houses, from one of many packing boxes.

This discovery was a sound stage recording from 2004 of the first ever performance with a new band (The Fortune Tellers) plus Howling Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin as a special guest.

“Live at Bluesfest 2004” was recorded at the world-famous Byron Bay Blues Fest and features the band with Hubert, in fine form, running through acoustic and electric versions of blues classics including ‘Spoonful’, ‘Who’s Been Talking’ and ‘Sitting On Top Of The World’ to name but three.

As well as capturing the musical and vocal interplay between Hubert and Fiona throughout, “Live at Bluesfest 2004” also features the harmonica and vocal range of the late Chris Wilson who was a major inspiration, mentor and talent on the Australian music scene, an inspiration which continues to the current day, some six years since his passing. Add to that the tight rhythm section of bassist, Dean Addison (My Friend the Chocolate Cake) and percussionist *extraordinaire*, Mark Grunden, both players with a long and varied history within the Australian music industry.

This 10 track live-set places the listener front and center for a piece of Australian (and American) blues history, some 21 years after making a mark on the BluesFest stage.

If this review makes you want to discover more, head to her website for a full discography and background of Fiona Boyes.

Frank Davidson



Robbin Kapsalis – The Blues Is in the House – Blues House Productions (www.blueshouseproductions.com)

There is just so much to like about this album, Robbin’s first under her own name. Some may recall her sultry, soulful voice from the excellent work she did with her band Vintage #18 which first brought her to a wider audience – and here many of her songs are presented with a knowing wink.

Her Chicago roots shine through loud and clear throughout on an excellent selection of songs, with the French band accompanying her getting the approach absolutely spot-on – they also have a thing for the sound of Slim Harpo. Husband Giles Robson – I would use the phrase “UK blues harmonica ace”, but he has gone way beyond the confines of Great Britain these days – is also in top form and I would guess influenced some of the selections – Little Walter’s ‘Up The Line’ is the second track, an early indication of how well they can work together on a traditional Windy City blues.

There's just not anything about this set that is not top-notch, it's classy blues, with humour and/ or attitude throughout. The final track offers a modern blues approach to Robbin's strong statement of intent whilst also referencing the roots, with nice dobro from guest Arnaud Fraudin. It's so good I almost forgot to mention that the title track also features the late great Joe Louis Walker in what must have been one of his very last recordings – he is in great form. It is a worthy tribute to a fallen blues master, but the whole album is a wonderful introduction to a woman who should become a household (blues) name in the not-too distant future. Album of the year contender? Yes...

Norman Darwen



Erin Harpe—Let The Mermaids Flirt With Me—VizzTone

Erin Harpe is a well established award winning country blues artist based in Boston USA. Together with her husband Jim Countryman they are now making an impact on the blues scene over on these shores here in the UK. This latest release, “Let The Mermaids Flirt With Me” is a tribute to Mississippi John Hurt.

There is no better place to start a Mississippi John Hurt tribute album than with perhaps his most famous song ‘Candy Man’, a great opener. I love the train whistle on ‘Casey Jones’ and the title track ‘Let Mermaids Flirt With Me’ relays a lovely folk tale. ‘Got The Blues (Can’t Be Satisfied)’ is a great little twelve bar blues whilst ‘Richland Woman’ has a more soulful feel to it.

‘Make Me A Pallet On Your Floor’ is another classic tune whilst yet another classic, ‘Frankie’ is sure to get your foot tapping. Erin’s version of ‘Nobody’s Dirty Business’ is quite reminiscent of ‘Cottonfields’ in its style. Perhaps one of the most iconic blues tunes of all time is ‘Stagolee’ and Erin does it justice here. The album closes with yet another classic tune, ‘You Are My Sunshine’ and you just can’t help but singalong!

This album is well put together with a clean and precise production that captures the essence of what is so good about acoustic country Piedmont style blues. Erin is not a blues shouter but a more refined blues singer with a gentle warm and inviting voice. She is also a great finger-style guitarist with impeccable timing and a true master of her craft. Her husband Jim Countryman really underpins the songs with his acoustic bass playing style that is both understated yet vital to the rhythm and he has the knack of playing all of the right notes in all the right places!

The overall feel of this album is quite intimate and personal, as if they are playing for you in your own living room. This album manages to conjure a mix of a 1960's vibe with some modern day polish and is indeed a fine tribute to the legend Mississippi John Hurt.

Ged Wilson



Jimmy Burns & Soul Message Band—Full Circle—Delmark Records

Jimmy Burns originally from Mississippi is now better known as an elder statesman of the Chicago blues scene. This album is a fresh take on some old songs that Jimmy has always liked hence the title, “Full Circle”.

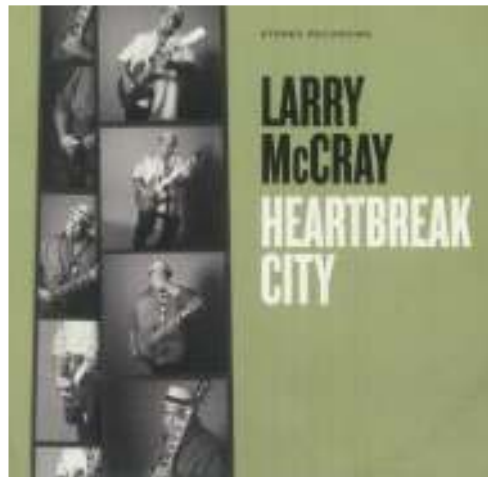
The album opens with the Charles Wright funky soul classic, ‘Express Yourself’. ‘World Of Trouble’ the old Big Joe Turner tune has that smokey jazz club vibe to it. ‘I Really Love You’ has a funky edge with some nice sax from Geof Bradfield. ‘Ain’t That Funk For You’ is a nice jazz instrumental featuring some lovely alto sax from Greg Jung. There is an uptempo swing to ‘Too Much Lovin’ with some nice baritone sax from Steve Eisen.

‘Give Her To Me’ has a nice old 60’s style soul feel to it. ‘It Used To Be’ is more of a funky soul offering whilst things slow down with the jazz blues instrumental, ‘Since I Fell For You’. There is a great rendition of Lil’ Son Jackson’s blues classic, ‘Rock Me Mama’ before the album closes with the soulful ‘Where Does That Leave Me?’.

This album is a good mix of jazz, soul and funk type blues which really suits Jimmy’s voice which has always had a soulful leaning to it and is still very rich and strong. The band play well throughout and I particularly like the lovely lush sounds of Chris Foreman’s Hammond organ which really knits everything together.

I was fortunate enough to get up and jam on stage with Jimmy in Chicago back in 2005 so it’s great to see he is still going strong at 82 years old!

Ged Wilson



Larry McCray—Heartbreak City—KTBA Records

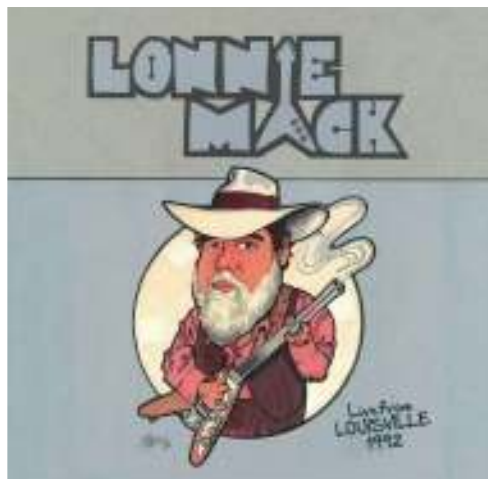
Larry McCray is an award winning blues artist from Michigan USA. A renowned blues singer and guitarist Larry's latest album, "Heartbreak City" is produced by Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith.

The album opens with 'Try To Be A Good Man' a cool soulful blues. The title track 'Heartbreak City' slows things down a little before cutting back to a great guitar solo. 'Bye Bye Blues' is a more old style soul ballad that brought to mind Van Morrison in style before they take things down a notch with 'Bright Side'. 'Everything Falls On Me' has a LoFi beat that underpins a driving boogie.

Things slow down again with 'I Know What I've Done' which features Joe Bonamassa. 'Keep On Loving My Baby' is a good old style foot tapping boogie that features some great guitar work from Kirk Fletcher and Josh Smith and some lovely piano from Reese Wynans. 'Hangman' has a great blues riff and there is a hint of Ry Cooder to this gospel offering. 'Stop Your Crying' is a gentle paced blues before the album closes with the funky 'Crazy World'.

This album is well produced with good use of brass, keys and backing vocals and no shortage of top notch guest musicians which really enhance the overall sound. As for Larry himself he has a great soulful voice which makes him stand out from the rest something similar to Bobby Bland in style. His guitar work is great too creating a lovely tone with great dynamics and he does not look out of place alongside the likes of Kirk Fletcher, Josh Smith and Joe Bonamassa on this album. Perhaps Larry's greatest strength is in his song arrangements which while still retaining the blues feel manage to conjure up well crafted songs that go beyond the basic twelve bar blues and really bring something different to the blues scene. This is a great album and one I am sure will go down well with all blues fans.

Ged Wilson



Lonnie Mack - Live from Louisville 1992—The Last Music Company

Lonnie Mack's Live from Louisville 1992 is more than a concert recording—it's a time capsule of raw, unfiltered blues-rock brilliance from one of the genre's founding fathers. Captured during a last-minute performance at the Kentucky Center for the Arts on July 23, 1992, this long-lost live set finally sees the light of day thanks to Last Music Co., marking the first commercial release of Mack's music since his passing in 2016.

While the audio quality isn't pristine—this was a radio broadcast tape restored decades later—the energy is undeniable. Mack, then 51, is in peak form, backed by longtime collaborators Bucky Lindsey (bass), Denzil “Dumpy” Rice (keys), and Jeff McAllister (drums). The quartet grooves through a seven-track set that blends blues, country, soul, and gospel into a Southern-fried stew of musical joy.

Check out ‘Camp Washington Chili / If You Have to Know’ which opens the set. A blistering medley that showcases Mack’s signature Flying V guitar tone.

‘Satisfy Suzie’ invites audience participation with its infectious sing-along vibe, and ‘Memphis / Wham’ pays homage to Lonnie’s groundbreaking 1963 instrumentals that helped define the rock guitar solo.

‘Oreo Cookie Blues’—just a straight twelve bar blues—and ‘Tough On Me, Tough On You’ are standout moments—intimate, witty, and emotionally resonant, especially the latter’s balladry.

Mack’s influence on guitar legends like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Beck, and Duane Allman is well documented, and this recording reinforces why. His phrasing, tone, and soulful vocals are a master class in expressive musicianship. Despite the lo-fi fidelity, “Live from Louisville 1992” is a vital documentary record of a pioneer doing what he did best: electrifying a crowd with heart and grit.

Ian K McKenzie



Zoe Schwarz, Rob Koral and Friends—Colourful House—Zoe Schwarz

Zoe Schwarz and Rob Koral’s “Colourful House” is a vibrant, genre-defying celebration of musical craftsmanship. Across 14 original tracks, the duo—joined by a stellar cast of collaborators—blend blues, funk, pop, and rock into a cohesive yet kaleidoscopic experience. Recorded at Echotown Studio in Dorchester, the album pulses with live energy and studio finesse.

Schwarz’s vocals are commanding and emotive, shifting seamlessly from torch-song vulnerability to soulful swagger. Koral’s guitar work is equally versatile—fluid, expressive, and never showy. Pete Whittaker’s Hammond organ adds vintage warmth, while Eddie John’s drumming anchors the grooves with precision. Guest musicians, including Ian Ellis (tenor sax) and Andy Urquhart (trumpet) inject bursts of brass brilliance, especially on ‘Out The Front Door’.

Standouts include the sultry opener ‘Venus Ain’t So Far Away,’ the introspective ‘A Tear Drop In The Sun’, and the title track ‘House of Colours’, which encapsulates the album’s eclectic spirit. The bonus track ‘It Ain’t Easy’ closes the set with a bluesy wink.

This one is a cracker!!

Ian K McKenzie



Eric Gales—A Tribute to LJK—Provogue Featuring Buddy Guy, Christone “Kingfish” Ingram, Joe Bonamassa & more

Eric Gales’ “A Tribute to LJK” is a fiery, heartfelt homage to his late brother Manuel ‘Little Jimmy King’ (LJK) Gales, a Memphis blues virtuoso whose legacy deserves far more spotlight. With an all-star lineup including Buddy Guy, Christone “Kingfish” Ingram, Joe Bonamassa, Roosevelt Collier, and Josh Smith, Gales re-imagines LJK’s originals through a modern blues-rock lens that’s both reverent and electrifying.

The album opens with ‘You Shouldn’t Have Left Me’, introduced by Manuel’s twin brother Danuel in a spoken-word tribute. It’s a swinging, horn-laced blues burner with Gales’ rich vocals and unhurried, soulful guitar phrasing. ‘Rockin’ Horse Ride’, featuring Kingfish, is a wah-wah drenched groove-monster, while ‘Don’t Wanna Go Home’ with Bonamassa delivers pure feel-good swagger.

‘Something Inside of Me’ slows the pace with piercing emotion, and ‘It Takes a Whole Lot of Money’ unites Gales, Bonamassa, and Smith in a tight blues-rock showcase. The closer, ‘Somebody’, featuring Buddy Guy and Roosevelt Collier, begins acoustically and builds into a cathartic crescendo—Guy’s vocals adding gravitas and grit.

Co-produced by Bonamassa and Smith, the album balances polish with warmth, never losing its live-in-the-room feel. Gales’ mission is clear: to keep LJK’s music alive and introduce it to a new generation. Mission accomplished.

Ian K McKenzie



Billy Branch—The Blues Is My Biography—Rosa’s Lounge Records

Billy Branch’s “The Blues Is My Biography” is a masterful, deeply personal statement from one of Chicago blues’ elder statesmen. Produced by Larry Batiste, the album features two distinct recording sessions—one in California, one in Chicago—and guests like Shemekia Copeland, Bobby Rush, and Ronnie Baker Brooks.

Branch’s harmonica work is as expressive as ever: jubilant on ‘Ballad of the Million Men’, fragile on ‘Toxic Love’, and mournful on the instrumental ‘Return of the Roaches’. His vocals, often overshadowed in past releases, shine with clarity and conviction. Tracks like ‘Harmonica Man’ and ‘Call Your Bluff’ offer lyrical snapshots of his life, while subtle touches of reggae, hip-hop, and soul keep the sound fresh.

This is not just a blues album—it is Branch’s legacy, lived and sung.

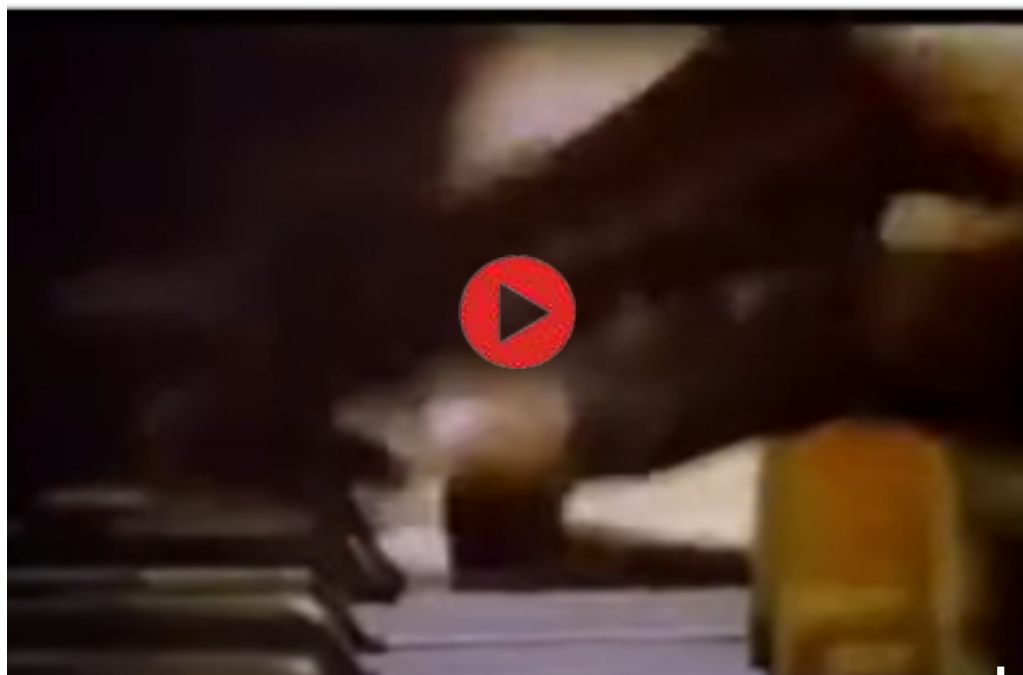
Ian K McKenzie



Duke Ellington - Ivy Anderson - I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good



Tuck Andress: Up And At It



Blind John Davis - Born To Lose

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~Billy Gibbons



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