

# BLUES MATTERS!

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APR/MAY 2021 ISSUE 119 £4.99

## GHALIA VOLT

**IN THIS ISSUE...**

LIZ BARAK  
KATIE KNIPP  
LISA MANN  
GRAINNE  
DUFFY  
ALASTAIR  
GREENE  
REGINA  
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# Editor in Chief's comment

## WELCOME to BM 119

OK, so how is 2021 settling for you already?

Still under lockdowns of some level wherever you are and as in my previous pages we still need to do the best we can in small numbers as allocated by our relevant governments and STAY SAFE and wear face masks shopping and whenever outdoors.

It will be nice to be able to walk down the street again and be able to say "hello" to folk and smile like we used to.

Come and get some more Blues Therapy in these here pages!

The launch of Blues Matters! merchandise has been well received. Last issue I said; "If there are items you want to see there that aren't there let us know, the range can be wider." There were a few requests as a result and we did just that - with orders placed straight away for our new polo shirt range.

A good number of fans spotted our Live Stream event on 26th February and took part. I was upset that the Annual Blues & Rock event did not take place in Skegness due to the Covid situation.



We discussed what we could do instead and created a plan where our scheduled acts from our stage would submit live recordings. We put together a six-act show running for almost 2 hours and played via Facebook that has received wonderful feedback and enthusiasm. Many have heard about it later and we have been asked if we are going to

repeat it. The answer is YES - after this very issue is out - and it will appear via our website. While you check our web site, do sign up for our Newsletter that will appear between issues so you are kept up to date on all things blues.

On the subject of the Blues & Rock event, we are proud to inform you that it won the Best UK Festival award at the UKBlues Awards 2021. Our congrats go to all the hard-working Events team in Skegness and the UK Entertainment manager. We hope to see you there in 2022 - fingers crossed!

Ok let's move deeper into 2021 in the pages of this issue and keep these Blues a rollin'...

**Alan 'D' Pearce**

Editor-in-Chief, Fan, Founder & Publisher



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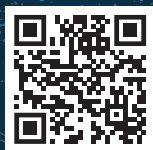
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# VIRTUAL BLUES

WORDS & PICTURES: ADAM KENNEDY

Music is a universal language that continues to bring us all together. Over the last ten months, my virtual photoshoot project has been a testament to this with over 450 sessions taking place with musicians located in all four corners of the planet. Since the last issue of Blues Matters Magazine, I've held remote photo sessions with musicians everywhere between Kent and Kathmandu. Presented on our pages here is just a little bit of what I've been up to since my last instalment.



## VINTAGE TROUBLE

(Los Angeles, California)

If you know of my history, you will know that I've been chronicling Vintage Trouble for the last ten years. I first met the band in 2011, and since that time I've photographed the quartet over 100 times around the world.

During the lockdown, Vintage Trouble have been hard at work on a new album, which will come as welcome news to the band's loyal fanbase – the “Troublemakers”. But at the same time, the band has taken an innovative and creative approach to maintain a relationship with their fans via the online platform Patreon. This being a place where the band and their fans can come together via exclusive live streams, Zoom hangouts, along with the bonus

of rare and previously unreleased tracks. I was fortunate enough to photograph the band during one of their regular live streaming events, which took place in a location with a lot of musical history – that being Laurel Canyon, California. For further details on Vintage Trouble's live streams check out the band's Patreon at the link: [www.patreon.com/vintage-trouble](http://www.patreon.com/vintage-trouble)



# REBECCA DOWNES

(Birmingham, UK)

The photo featured here was taken as part of a virtual photo session with Rebecca Downes at the end of 2020 and appears on the rear cover of her new album 'Stripped Back'. During the lockdown, Rebecca along with guitarist Steve Birkett took the opportunity to revisit songs from their vast repertoire. Rebecca's latest offering features re-workings of 12 songs, including two new tracks "Washing All Over My Heart" and "Blues For Us", the latter of which will be the first single to be released from the album.

Speaking of her forthcoming release Rebecca said: "Once it was clear that gigging was some months away, we spoke and agreed that it was the opportunity to bring this project forward and get on with it. Then when the first lockdown eased, we did some duo online gigs and that convinced us even more that there was real scope to present these numbers in a new and exciting way that would appeal to our supporters. And I'm over the moon that the two new tracks can be released at last. I have always really loved them, but I couldn't see how they would ever fit on one of our normal blues/rock albums."

Following the imminent release of 'Stripped Back', Downes will be continuing to present her work online as well as developing new material with her sights set on releasing an album of new original material either in the latter states of 2021 or early next year.



# CHERRY LEE MEWIS

(UK)

I caught up with Cherry Lee Mewis at the start of the year. If you've watched any of the artist's live streams you might recognise the spot where we took the photograph. During the shoot, even Cherry's beloved whippet Harbour wanted to get in on the frame and steal the limelight for a moment. Like most musicians during the lockdown, live streaming has become the norm, but if you are looking for something to take you back to those glorious days of in-person concerts then why not check out Cherry's latest live album "Late Night Lock-In".



## JOANNA CONNOR

(Chicago, Illinois)

I got to photograph slide guitar supremo Joanna Connor at home in Chicago during the latter stages of last year. Connor's new album '4801 South Indiana Avenue' is causing quite a stir, with rave reviews from across the globe making it one of the most exciting blues albums to be released during 2021. The album is produced by and released on Joe Bonamassa's new record label "KTBA Records". Speaking of the album itself Joanna goes on to say: "We chose the album title '4801 South Indiana Avenue' because it was the actual street address of the hallowed funky blues sanctuary 'Theresa's Lounge.' We want the listener to open that door, walk in and feel to their core some of the magic that a place like that brought night after night. It was an honor to bring this to you, the listener." All we can say is mission accomplished in that respect.

## CONNOR BRACKEN

(Asbury Park, New Jersey)

I photographed Connor Bracken in a further legendary musical location that being Asbury Park, New Jersey. This shot was taken on the famous Asbury Park Boardwalk. When you think of Asbury Park, immediately artists such as Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street Band, Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes and Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul all spring to mind. When you listen to the album "Night-bird Motel" by Connor Bracken and the Mother Leeds Band it's clear to see that the band are following the footsteps of their esteemed peers. Bracken was kind enough to show me around some of the sights of this historic coastal town.





# BIG BOY BLOATER

(La Rochelle, France)

During the final moments of 2020, I caught up with Big Boy Bloater at home in France. To stay connected with his fanbase, BBB is now releasing a new video every Sunday entitled 'The Sunday Song'. These weekly releases are songs that are close to the artist's heart or have influenced or inspired him in some way. Tracks featured so far include covers of Nick Lowe's "Cruel To Be Kind" and "Here Comes The Sun" by The Beatles, with more songs on the way in the coming weeks. You can check out the recordings on Big Boy Bloater's Facebook page, and if you enjoy his work why not drop him a tip/buy him a coffee at the same time.



# DANI WILDE

(Brighton, UK)

Blues Matters Magazine's very own Dani Wilde got the year off to a good start as she headed into Brighton Road Recording studios to work on some new material. As you can see from the photo, I caught up with the 'British Blues Belle' in the studio mid-session.

Speaking of the work in progress Dani goes on to say "I have a collection of both cover songs and originals that I'm currently working on recording. These are for two separate projects. The covers project is a collection of creative covers of songs originally composed and recorded by blues women - many of them from the 1920s. Today I laid down my own interpretation of an Ida Cox song and a Ma Rainey song. I've been listening to a lot of Bonnie Raitt and a lot of Aretha Franklin, so they also really inspired my performances in the studio today. I try to take what I love about these beautiful, crafted songs and to add my own creativity and sound and emotion into it."

But the plan for the release of these tracks is still yet to be confirmed. Dani said "I'm not sure yet when I'll be releasing the tracks. I'm hoping to team up with filmographer Philip James who makes lovely music videos, and I'm also hoping that VizzTone Records will want to be involved again as they've put out my last album and run of singles."



# ANSON FUNDERBURGH & JOSE RAMIREZ

(St. Petersburg, Florida)

I recently had the honour of photographing Texas blues legend Anson Funderburgh during a moment of downtime whilst undertaking a small stint of socially distanced shows in Florida, where he was performing alongside Costa Rican bluesman Jose Ramirez.

Funderburgh's history runs long and deep. He has been the bandleader of Anson Funderburgh and the Rockets since 1974. Most recently Anson can be seen featuring on the single "Cherry On Top" by Johnny Burgin, released on the Delmark Records label.

Anson also has many producer credits to his name, including the likes of Dany Franchi's 2018 album "Problem Child" and more recently Jose Ramirez's latest album "Here I Come". It is of no surprise that when you bring together a pair of musicians of the calibre of Anson Funderburgh and Jose Ramirez that the result would be a nomination in the "Best Emerging Artist Album" category at the 42nd Blues Music Awards, for "Here I Come" - the album they worked on together.

But the good news doesn't stop there for Jose Ramirez, with a major label signing putting the artist even more in the spotlight. In a recent social media posting, Ramirez went on to say that "Today I signed the contract that makes me a Delmark Records artist, being the first Latin-American Blues artist to ever sign with Delmark. The first single "Whatever She Wants" will be released in April". Jose Ramirez is a real deal bluesman, and if you don't believe me just look at the tattoo on his forearm.





## FERNANDO DE LOS SANTOS

(Dallas, Texas)

Throughout the pandemic, many artists have undertaken projects to keep them inspired/creative. But for Texas-based keyboard player Fernando De Los Santos, the intention was to create an addition to his stellar rig (pictured) that was quite literally out of this world. Which is not surprising since his catchphrase is "Landing UFOs", but that's a different story. Fernando, who can be usually seen performing in the Ally Venable Band, developed a very unique synth to add to his gargantuan setup.

In a social media posting Fernando goes on to describe his new synth's moment of creation by stating that "Last night, this thing came alive after a week of insanity with all the little wires and soldering. The middle has a 12AU7 tube only for bling with a red LED hot glued to the bottom of it and wired into the CV for blink effect when hitting a note. I also added a photoresistor on top that made the hair stand up on my spine. This is a two-oscillator synth that I created from scratch, except the blue orb housing."

You can keep up to date with my work in each issue of Blues Matters Magazine, along with my social media pages via: <https://linktr.ee/akennedyphotographer>.



# Jamming

## with a local hero

WORDS: Matty T. Wall PICTURES: Skyler Slate

Welcome back down under everyone – I hope you're keeping safe and well and keeping out of harm's way. We in Western Australia had 10 months of no-lockdown finally broken and we are now in lockdown once again.

Just goes to show this thing will be with us for a while – so we should make the most of live gigs where and when they come up, within guidelines. Music is a healer, part of the important fabric of our society.

So, I wanted to share with you a moment in time, a live show that finally brought my Transpacific Blues Vol.1 to life – something that fans had been wanting to see since this all-star blues jam album with Eric Gales, Walter Trout, Kirk Fletcher, Dave Hole and Kid Ramos topped blues charts through 2019/2020.

Dave Hole and I, as I have written about before, share the same city, Perth, Western Australia, so it was apparent that someday we would jam out these songs on stage together to the delight of our local blues audience. I also wanted to share this experience as blues jamming in local clubs and groups is vital to the strength and longevity of our blues music communities. I'm sure many who are reading this love to get down to local blues jams. Well, this wasn't your

local blues jam – it was my birthday! Several years ago, I started putting on blues jam concerts on my birthday, inspired by the birthday blues shows that Buddy Guy does at his club. The number of times I've listened to his birthday jams with other artists like Albert Collins and Stevie Ray Vaughan and been inspired by the guitar exchanges have been many.



Dave Hole was happy to be involved, along with other local guitarists, Dave Brewer, Steve Garde; and the preparations began. Due to the rules we have been working with over 2020, we could not hold large shows, so most of the concerts I have been doing have been confined to jazz-club type venues. Unfortunately, this meant that many fans were going to miss out – the tickets sold out in a matter of days!

As a musician, one thing that is an honour, is to learn from master musicians – musicians who have had more concerts than hot dinners, share stories from the road and have a particular way of doing things, honed from all those years playing and performing. I have learned much from my drummer, Ric Whittle, who has backed artists such as Chuck Berry and played alongside ZZ Top and others. Learning from Dave was enlightening. How to

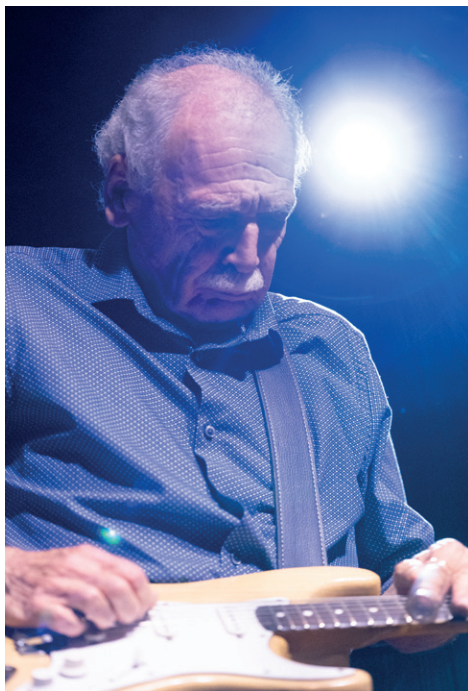


introduce songs with the right guitar lines, lead the band, get the traditional feel for different blues songs by accenting certain beats – things I had known about before but somehow hearing from a respected peer

– the message took on greater significance. We all got together on the prior day to top-and-tail the songs – musician speak for a rehearsal where we discuss how each song will start and finish – give it a go and then wrap it up, ready for the show. The tones from these guys were amazing, especially from Dave

Brewer's vintage Deluxe and Strat – very tasty! I had brought along my big one-hundred watt amp and big speaker cab to rehearsal while everybody brought along small combos – it was overkill – so I decided on the gig to bring along my Marshall Bluesbreaker combo. Well, Dave Hole rocked up to the gig with a Marshall stack! And it sounded glorious. Suffice to say, he had the biggest tone of the night, and I learnt my lesson – Ha,ha.

The night started with a quick set of my originals to warm-up the crowd, and they were ready. Drinks were flowing and the vibe was epic. I invited Dave Hole and the other guys on stage and we proceeded to play over all the blues classics, trade solos and let our own individual styles shine though. That's actually another thing I love about listening to blues jams with seasoned musicians – there is no 'cutting,' no bravado and competition, everyone plays their style to the best of their abilities



and speaks to the music in the best way they know how. There were definitely some solos that traded back-and-forth, but bringing about a sense of joy rather than competitiveness.

Everyone got to showcase a song or two, and learning from masters like Dave Hole, how relaxed they were on stage, prepared and comfortable to take on any twists and turns from new versions of old songs was a great experience. And when Dave Hole took the solo, he'd stretch out his wings and build that solo into some-

thing great. Fiery and explosive slide maestro – what he is best known for.

I will definitely continue to do more of these types of shows in the future – I think the sense of community it brings to local blues scenes is something that is always needed – plus it's a great excuse to learn from other musicians – you learn different things from being on stage with them rather than just watching them on stage. That is a tradition that Buddy Guy and Walter Trout continue to this day, taking on young players to learn the ropes and share in that tradition. It is a tradition worth keeping and learning from, and playing the blues is just such damn fun!

I am hoping that when this Covid mess is all over, I can tour the UK and Europe and jam with some of your local legends too – keep the blues club spirit alive. I will leave you with some pictures of this epic show and talk to you next time!

# PHENOMENAL BLUES WOMEN

# WILLA MAE BUCKNER

## THE SNAKE LADY

WORDS: Dani Wilde PICTURES: As credited

Born on June 15th, 1922, in Augusta, Georgia, Willa Mae Buckner was known as “The Wild Enchantress,” “Princess Ejo,” “The Snake Lady,” and “The World’s Only Black Gypsy.” She was a blues singer, chorus girl, burlesque dancer and snake handler, known for her wonderful personality, whose performances could entertain any crowd.

Buckner’s story is fascinating, but her life was filled with hardship. Her childhood had been a happy one; a local hang-out, full of family friends, loud music and dancing.

“They liked my daddy’s home brew, but they favoured my mama’s moonshine,” Buckner would recall. “You know I was out there shaking my to-tee-to.” But her happy home was torn apart when her Mother died; Buckner was just 11 years old. Her father was quick to remarry and young Willa Mae felt she was treated unfairly by her new step-mother.

At the age of fourteen she ran away from home. Willa spent a short time staying with her uncle, until one evening she visited a minstrel show passing through town. By the morning, she had joined up as a chorus girl and a new chapter of her life began. She changed her surname to Brown to prevent being found by her family. In the carnival shows she learned many new skills including swallowing swords and lying on beds of nails!

“The first show I was on was with Jimmy Samson, a minstrel show. A lady named Diamond Teeth Mary was with the show then... I had the opportunity to meet Ma Rainey. We weren’t on



PHOTO BY TIMOTHY DUFFY

the same show, our show was the next town over and a group of us went over to visit the show she was on. I saw Ida Cox. I always did want to be a performer...I worked in the chorus-line, we made our own costumes. Man, we worked, eating on the run, that was something.” (Interview - Living Blues Magazine, April 1993)

Inspired by the classic blues women she had seen perform, Willa Mae began performing her own risqué, dirty blues repertoire. In her early 20’s she learned to play the piano and by her mid- thirties, she had also taken up blues guitar. On Friday and Saturday nights, after the family show, she would perform an after-hours strip-tease dance for racially segregated audiences.



# PHENOMENAL BLUES WOMEN

"I would strip, too. You know, what we call the "Midnight Ramble." No children would come in. It would come on about 12 o'clock, that's before we closed. We would do the last show, the starlight show, then everyone had to leave and buy more tickets to see the ramble. Some places we were allowed to strip all the way, it wasn't like it is now. You'd strip, you'd take this piece off and throw it away, throw that away. You had to make sure to stay away from the edge of the stage." (Willa Mae Buckner, *Living Blues Magazine*, 1993)

Buckner's versatility and character as a performer made her a memorable act. She had many fans in each neighbourhood the show travelled to. "I worked the nail bed," she told *Blues Music Chronicler* Gaile Welker. "I ate fire. I also did the bronze dance: That's where you go all over the body with mineral oil and you put that gold paint on. You did contortions when you were in that stuff, and if you weren't careful, you'd fall flat on your rear or your belly."

By 1946, Buckner was ready for a change, and so she left the tent shows, and another chapter of her life began. She made a home for herself in Spanish Harlem and earned money waitressing whilst studying foreign languages at night school – She could speak seven languages!



PHOTO BY MARK AUSTIN

Buckner also took regular classes in tap and gypsy-style belly dancing, and continued her musical performances fronting a Calypso band in small clubs.

By 1964, Buckner was 46 years old and she attended The World's Fair, in Queens, New York. Of all the performances she saw, she found herself most captured by a Moroccan snake handler. She thought to herself "If this man can come to my country and make money showing snakes, I'll bet I can, too." Buckner found a new passion; she built up a collection of 28 snakes and eventually, bought herself a truck and a tent and went back on the road with a travelling carnival show. In her show, she would

tell people about her snakes as they slithered around in a pit or draped themselves over her body. She stayed on the road until 1973 when her truck broke down. She took this as a sign that it was time for change and left her life on the road, settling near her family in Winston Salem.

Opting for a more traditional life, she found work as a local bus driver, decided to quit smoking and began attending church - although she kept her pet snakes. She stayed in the area for 20 years and even in her 70's continued to perform the blues at small local venues, which

# PHENOMENAL BLUES WOMEN



led to an unexpected opportunity. In 1994, Tim and Denise Duffy established the 'Music Maker Relief Foundation' and they began to spread the word about forgotten heroes of the blues. Having long been out of the spotlight, Willa Mae Buckley was invited to perform at Carnegie Hall as part of a show called 'Circus Blues' sharing the stage with her old carnival friend Diamond Teeth Mary and many others. Buckner's set had her audience laughing and smiling as she performed her cheeky signature songs "Let Me Play With Your Yo-Yo" and "Peter Rumpkin". She received a standing ovation.

"Willa was a great performer," Tim Duffy recalled. "She exuded sex appeal. I'd bring friends to see her and they couldn't understand how this skinny old lady could turn you on like that. I imagine when she was young it must have been completely outrageous."

Her Carnegie Hall performance led to her be-

ing billed in a run of package shows for Music Maker, and in 1999, she found herself on the same bill as Taj Mahal. When Mahal performed his song Big legged Momma's back in style again with the lyric "she will shake her hooters like a soft boiled egg", Buckner teased him "I would like to do that as part of a striptease - I think it would be appropriate."

When she wasn't on stage, Buckner spent her time at home in the company of her two 15-foot-long pythons, Siam and Pepe. By the end of 1999, Buckner became ill. She was in her late 70's and had recently broken her hip. She also suffered from gout which was very painful, and the Music Maker relief foundation helped to take care of her, covering the costs of her medicine. She passed away on the 8th January 2000. Her funeral was attended by friends from many walks of life.

Performer Tattoo Joe attended the service.



# PHENOMENAL BLUES WOMEN

"She was a good friend," he recalled. "She had her snake show back when I had my freak show, and we travelled around together. First time I saw her I went to see her show, and I looked at those snakes and said, 'They'd make nice boots.' She heard me and cussed me out. She cussed better than a sailor."

Taj Mahal spoke of her talent and drive as a business woman: "I don't think there's any era that could have repressed her," he said... "She was a combination of Granny on the Beverly Hillbillies and some seriously crazy black burlesque queen from back in the day." Mahal continued: "Willa Mae was as real as it's going to get in this century, or in the next."

Tim Duffy of Music Maker recalled "She was from the pre-television, segregation era, and Willa was a star. People think the blues is just Muddy Waters. In Southern, working-class African-American communities, though, they might not even know who Muddy Waters was, but they know Willa because she came to play the tent show every year. Three generations of people came out to see her snake shows."

Willa Mae Buckner was a strong and inspiring woman. It is said she never left home without lipstick, high heels and a knife! She was an independent minded career woman who sang unapologetically about female sexuality, in the rural South, at a time where most women were

held back by rigid gender stereotypes. In the great depression and war years, more women in American society began to work, however black women were mostly employed as domestics which was seen as 'acceptable women's work.' Willa Mae Buckner made herself a life as a celebrated entertainer and was not afraid to speak, and sing, her mind. Inspired by the Vaudeville greats, Buckner was part of a tradition of circus and medicine shows that is largely undocumented, but you can hear her music on various Music Maker Compilations. There is also a great documentary called Toots Blues (2008) in which she is featured, that captures her personality, her music – and her snakes!



PHOTO COPYRIGHT CONTROL MUSIC MAKER ARCHIVE

# THE PALACE OF THE KING

WORDS: Adam Kennedy   PICTURES: As Credited



**FREDDIE KING IN AMSTERDAM, 1973**  
- PHOTO COURTESY BERT VERHOEFF UNDER CC0 1.0

**Freddie King's immense influence on the music world is unquestionable. He is regarded as one of the "Three Kings of the Blues" alongside both Albert King and B.B. King.**

To say that Freddie King has left an indelible impression on the blues world is an understatement. So much so that if you walk into any blues concert it wouldn't be out of the ordinary to hear a cover of his unmistakable hits such as 'Going Down' or 'Have You Ever Loved A Woman' at least once somewhere during the set. The legendary bluesman sadly passed away in 1976, but his legacy lives on through the music

that he left behind and the hearts of the people that he touched along the way. Freddie King's legacy was permanently marked by his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as part of the 2012 class.

In the upcoming issues of Blues Matters Magazine, we will be catching up with Freddie's family, bandmates and acquaintances to discuss the great man himself, and his impact upon the music world. We start this current issue by talking with Freddie's daughter Wanda King, to find out a bit about family life within the King household and growing up in the music business.



## **As both a musician and a promoter, we started by chatting with Wanda about the impact of the current pandemic on the music world.**

God, the current situation is so devastating. It's a catastrophe for the music world – everything that is creative is at a pause. And not only at a pause, but it's also a struggle. It is a financial disaster.

I feel so bad for my musician friends. I'm a vocalist/bandleader and I perform with five to ten band members for gigs depending on the event - whether it be corporate parties, weddings etc. My shows range from performing in nightclubs to acting as the house band for upscale restaurants/Blues sets. I also do the opening acts for major entertainment coming through the area.

I'm a promoter and my best moments include bringing in Blues and R&B legends such as Johnny Winter, Bobby Blue Bland, Edgar Winter, Hubert Sumlin, Denise LaSalle and others. I also brought in Johnny Winter when he was struggling with health issues and no one would book him.

## **Wanda recalls her first encounter with Johnny Winter.**

I've known Johnny Winter for years. We first met when I was a little girl at the Texas Pop Festival. I was still in school at the time. On the day of the event, we all got dressed up and we packed our lunches. My Dad drove the band bus to the festival site in Lewisville, Texas, because he was trying to impress my Mom. My Mom and Dad had seven kids, of which I'm the oldest.

On arrival, we all got out of the bus and started running around, because we were able to. I remember it being such an exciting experience because I was meeting people like Tony Joe White and everyone who performed that day. One of the people that stood out to me was

Johnny Winter because he was albino, he was tall and thin, with soft white skin and his beautiful long platinum hair. When Johnny saw my Dad, he lit up, he was like Freddie! You know, just like a kid. And I knew that my Dad was famous, but not to the extent that I realized that day.

I recall going into a tent that was serving refreshments - even though we had our own sodas on the bus. But they were offering something for free. Back then it was a hippie environment, and they were handing out Kool-Aid to everyone.

Johnny Winter realized that we were getting ready to go into the tent. Now what we didn't realize was that they had spiked the Kool-Aid. So instead of Johnny stopping us, he ran and got my Dad, and my Dad ran to me. I saw him coming at us and he's running, he's hollering at us - hey, what is going on? At this point, my brother was getting ready to take a drink. He snapped the cup out of his hand. He said, drink nothing in this area. Drink nothing in any tent. Don't drink any Kool-Aid and if you get thirsty, go back to the bus. I found out later that they had put LSD or Mushrooms in there - there was something in the Kool-Aid. That was in '69, I was still in grade school.

## **Freddie King was an iconic musician, but he was also a loving father.**

My Dad was a good father; he was a family man. During the summers, before he became famous, we would take summer road trips to Chicago to visit family. My father's aunts and uncles were always welcome in our home.

He respected and loved family and his elders that he was raised with in East Texas. They all had relocated to Chicago. He would invite them down because he wanted us to know our people. This includes anyone that was related to the family or who he made honorary family. For example, I remember an ex-girlfriend of my

uncle who was coming through town. He would say, don't stay at the hotel, come stay with us we've got plenty of room. He just loved family – people he was familiar with.

He bought a Tri-Sonic boat, and his thing was fishing. When he would pull up with the boat, the neighbours got excited because they knew that he was going to invite them to go out on the Lake and fish for a couple of days. They would fish and bring back fish. The neighbours, all would come out and say, okay, what did you catch? We want it.

He would perform shows to raise money for the Heart Association. He would play shows for the schools to raise money for football equipment. And he

would try to go to as many football games as possible to support my brothers. But after he joined Leon Russell's Shelter Record label and recorded the Blues/Rock hit "Going Down" on the album 'Getting Ready' his popularity grew. Now he was sharing the world stage with the young European Bluesmen - Eric Clapton, John Mayall, The Rolling Stones etc. He became instantly recognizable. So much so, that when he walked on the scene, people would say oh my God, that's Freddie King!

He is known as the "Father of Pop Blues" based on his instrumental recordings on the King/Federal Label recordings and the "Father of Blues Rock" based on his recordings on the Shelter Records Label. My Dad was a good father - he promoted family. I am very proud of

my father's achievements. He took care of his wife, his children, and his family. He provided a livelihood for his musicians. His talent took them all to the world stage of show business.

I never saw liquor in the house except for when my parents had a party or company. My father did a good job of making home life normal for his wife and children. But the life of a world-famous touring Bluesman was far from normal.

**Wanda recounts the first time she saw her father perform live at the legendary Regal Theater in Chicago.**

When I first saw him perform live, I was maybe six. I remember always seeing his guitar in the house and I know that we broke one of

his guitars one day, the kids were running and playing. It was one of his Les Paul's - a Gold Top.

My Mom and Dad took me and my sisters and brothers to a matinee show at the now legendary Regal Theatre in Chicago. You would see a matinee movie and a live show, which would include a showcase of live entertainment. They would have performers like Jackie Wilson, The Shirelles, Chuck Jackson, or B.B. King - all of these people would perform at these Black theatres all over the nation.

That day, my parents got us dressed, and we arrived at the Regal Theatre. At this point, I'm thinking that we were going to see cartoons or a movie. And then, this guy comes out on stage smoking a cigarette - a short light-skinned guy,



**FREDDIE KING WITH WIFE JESSIE**  
- PHOTO COURTESY WANDA KING



he said he's called Redd Foxx. I don't know who he is. But obviously, every one of the adults knew who he was because he did the blue comedy albums. And I didn't know what that was until I grew up.

On stage, Redd Foxx started by announcing the show for the day, and he mentions Freddie King. I said, well my Dad is named Freddie King. And then out comes this guy wailing on his guitar playing and singing. I said oh my God, that's my Dad. So, that's how I learned that my Dad was a Bluesman. Plus, my father's brother, Benny Turner he played the bass in the band.

**Wanda grew up in a musical household, where her Dad would often bring records home to the family. He had a particular interest in Country and Western music.**

As time went on, he would bring home records/albums from his recording sessions when he was with King Federal. The funny thing about

King Federal, this guy recorded everybody. My Dad brought home Bill Doggett, Earl Bostic, Nina Simone, Hank Ballard, Albert King, and James Brown - because they were all on the label.

He brought in Country and Western music, because my Dad was a Country and Western fan. He brought home artists such as the Wilbur Brothers. If the music was good and he liked the artist, he brought those albums home. I was a kid, but I listened to everything and my Mom would get mad because sometimes I would scratch up the albums. So, this is how I got to know music and I liked what he liked. I would listen to his albums and his early recordings over and over. My Mom loved his music, we listened to it all the time.

**Often famous faces from the blues world would drop by the King family household.**

I was exposed to the Chicago life of musicians

**WANDA KING**  
- PHOTO COURTESY  
DAVID LANFORD



because they would come by the house. I remember meeting Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters. But I specifically remember Howlin' Wolf because again I'm five and six years old, if not younger. But because my Dad played his music, as soon as he opened his mouth and started talking, I said, oh my God, you are that man that says, 'Oh baby', on the records. My Dad looked at me because he knew I was right. I had an ear and he just laughed. Howlin' Wolf said, oh, I don't sing no 'Oh baby'. And so, this is all part of my life, growing up in the business. They were regular people coming by having dinner, hanging out, and playing cards.

**Freddie King's influence within the music world is still visible today. Wanda regards artists such as Eric Clapton as the 'Direct Disciples of Freddie King's music'.**

Everybody borrows from somebody. I listen to them and sometimes I will go here and there. Sometimes things come up, but then I've got to speak about it. Like Memphis Mini - I love her music. I didn't know about her until I was fully grown. I would sit and listen to her and her husband. And I'm listening to the licks that all of the post-war blues men ripped off. I'm like, okay, they're already playing this stuff.

They said that when my Dad did "Hideaway" that he kind of borrowed from somebody else. Hell yeah, that's what you do. You pick up something and you add to it and make it better. One of my Dad's favourite shows was Peter Gunn. So, when you hear "Hideaway" and he does [Wanda sings the rhythm part], that's Peter Gunn - the TV series and that's Henry Mancini. So, it's like giving props.

I'm sure that you read where Eric Clapton has even stated that the reason why he bought a Les Paul is that Freddie King played one. And the reason why he started playing the blues is that he listened to "Have You Ever Loved A



**FREDDIE KING TOUR BUS**  
- PHOTO COURTESY STEPHEN NICHOLAS

Woman" on the flip side of "Hideaway" or "Tore Down". And that's still a part of his catalogue when he performs now, you hear him play "Tore Down" and "Christmas Tears". He played "Christmas Tears" at the White House. They aren't young guys anymore, but these artists were the Direct Disciples of Freddie King's music.

**Wanda got her first taste of performing live when her father invited her to sing backing vocals .**

He only did it a couple of times. And stage fright was certainly there for me. I remember I was sitting at the table with the rest of the family. This was at the Longhorn Ballroom, this long-established venue. And we're talking about a couple of thousand people who could be in that place sitting at a table. They had big round tables that would sit maybe ten to twenty people. It was like a huge, elongated barn. It



was one of the biggest shows and it was absolutely packed. People were standing up and he called me up on the stage. I'm like, huh. But he knew I knew his music, as I listened to it all the time. And so, I did some background vocals. I didn't really come up and sing any verses, but I was harmonizing with him.

### **Mother Blues was the place to be for Texas Blues artists.**

My Dad's favourite place to hang out when he was in town was Mother Blues and everybody who was anybody would stop by. That's where I first met Jimmie Vaughan - and I was underage. During that time, you could be 13 years old and come into a spot like that - as long as your parents were there. We are talking about the hippie generation; things were kind of loosey-goosey.

You had all of the up-and-coming artists, which I didn't know then, but I did know Jimmie,

through my father's booking agent John Branch. But another kid that was there, I remember seeing him, but I didn't make anything of it was his brother Stevie. We were young, maybe thirteen. And I think Jimmie, might have been a few years older than us.

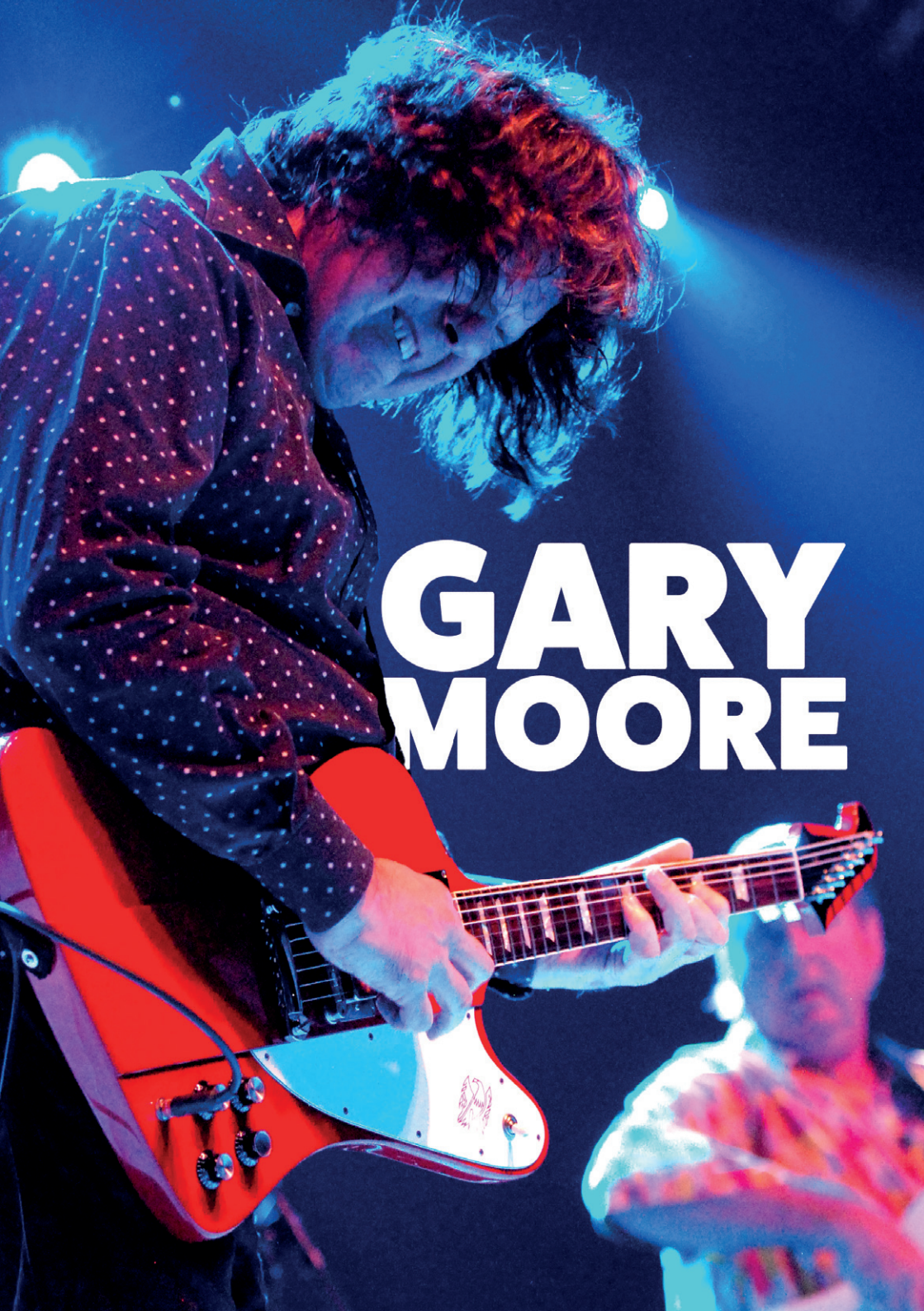
My Dad would sometimes go up on stage and sit in with the local bands. And they would be in awe - Freddie King is going to sit in with us! And then afterwards he would go upstairs and gamble all night playing poker. Because it was known that if you wanted a hot poker game, and you wanted to play with Freddie King, that's where you go to play - at Mother Blues. It's like Grand Funk Railroad said: 'Poker's his thing'.

Look out for more tales of Freddie King in the coming issues of Blues Matters as we speak with his bandmates and colleagues. For Official Freddie King merchandise, please visit

**[freddiekingonlinestore.com](http://freddiekingonlinestore.com)**



**WANDA KING**  
- PHOTO COURTESY  
DAVID LANFORD



# GARY MOORE



**This year, 2021, signals a memorable time for fans of Belfast-born guitarist Gary Moore, as it marks the year of the 10th Anniversary of Gary's passing. February 6th, 2011, was the day shock waves rippled out to Gary Moore fans around the world when the news broke of his death in his sleep on the first night of a Spanish holiday.**

**WORDS:** Sharon Quigley **LIVE PICTURES:** Marco van Rooijen

What made Gary Moore so versatile as a musician and songwriter was not only his outstanding guitar playing and voice, but an ability to effortlessly transcend musical genres with each band and album he was part of and/or released.

From the eccentric and unusual heavy rock style of Skid Row to the progressive fusion of Colosseum II to the unmistakable sound of Thin Lizzy and beyond. Introducing his solo career with the album 'Grinding Stone' followed by 'Back on the Streets' featuring his epic first solo hit, 'Parisienne Walkways.' Moore's talent was evident as he followed up with the unexpectedly heavy Celtic sound of his epic 'Wild Frontier' and his last rock album 'After the War,' before returning to the blues fold with 'Still Got Blues.'

With close to 40 albums, including many collaborations with other legendary artists throughout his career including George Harrison, Ozzy Osbourne, Albert King, BB King, Albert Collins, Greg Lake, Cozy Powell and many others, his varied and formidable output is a testament to Moore's versatility as a musician-singer-songwriter.

Gary's fans around the world are soon due something of a treat with the release of a new album: 'How Blue Can You Get,' a collection of eight previously unreleased recordings featuring some great blues-rock classics, offering a perfect mix of slow blues originals.

**I spoke with the youngest of the Moore family, Gary's sister Patricia (who also happens to be a Co-Director of the Gary Moore Belfast statue project.) Together, we listened to the new album, and I was curious to know what she thought of it.**

### **The first track 'I'm Tore Down'**

**Patricia:** What I call the Happy blues, that real upbeat feeling!

### **Next was 'Stepping Out' from Memphis Slim, also made famous by John Mayall's Blues Breakers.**

**Patricia:** I love this instrumental, it really gets you into the groove!

### **'In My Dreams'**

**Patricia:** I just love this, you can sing along with this one after listening to it a couple of times, the lyrics are very catchy and easy for anyone to relate to.

### **'How Blue Can You Get'**

**Patricia:** Classic Old school blues, it's got a nice "cool" vibe!

### **'Looking At Your Picture'**

**Patricia:** This one is slide guitar. Another sound, off in a different direction. It's good that they put this one on the album too!

### **'Love Can Make A Fool of You'**

**Patricia:** Yeah, I like this one - it really gets at your heartstrings.

### **'Done Somebody Wrong'**

**Patricia:** It's good to see the album go into a different mood. I like the way it's doing that through the whole album, like it's telling a story. They have done a really good job.



**'Living With The Blues'**

**Patricia:** I think it's an epic sort of, typical Gary Moore end of a blues album, it's a sad song, but yeah. The whole album tells a story, it's like I was saying before. People will love to have this for their collection, and when they listen to it, they will see it really stands up on its own. A round-up of his whole world of blues. You can hear all of his blues influences but wrapped up in Gary Moore. I know his blues fans are going to really love it.

**Next, I wanted to interview Eric Bell, founding guitarist of Thin Lizzy. Although Eric and Gary never played in a band together, I knew they were lifelong friends from their early days growing up in Belfast and I also wanted to ask Eric about a funny story, because I know he always has plenty of them!**

**Eric:** I first met Gary at a club in Hollywood, Northern Ireland. I was playing with the Deltones and we played at a club which Gary's father ran. We got there at the gig that night and when I walked in Gary was already there playing his guitar and checking his amps. He was playing with a band called The Beat Boys, who were on before the Deltones and I watched the Beat Boys play. I remember they played that Beatles song "Help" and there's a right tricky little piece of guitar in there. It's quite tricky and I watched to see if Gary got it, and he got it perfectly and I thought he was a really good player, he was only around 11 years old! He stayed and watched me play, and we started talking after the gig. We got to know each other then. If I was playing in Belfast he would turn up to watch me, and if he was playing in Belfast I would turn up to watch him. That sort of thing and we got to know each other.

**Incredible that he was up on the stage at**

**11 years old and making such an impression. Can you tell me one of the funny things you remember that you both had a good laugh about?**

**Eric:** Well [pauses] there was a night in Dublin around the time when Gary was playing with Skid Row, and Thin Lizzy had just started. Myself and Gary went out for a few drinks one night and we already had a few, when found ourselves at this place and it was called Dublin Blues Appreciation Society. There was a guy there playing records. He was announcing each of the records as he put them on - who was playing; and the artists all had those real blues names. So, me and Gary, we thought we would start announcing the records for him except we were making up our own blues names for them and just laughing at each other. We must have really upset the guy as we ended up getting kicked out of the place!

**Curious to find out how Gary got to join Skid Row (Ireland), I had a chat with the band's founder, Brush Shiels.**

**Where were you the first time you heard Gary play?**

**Brush:** It was one night at a gig, and Gary was filling in for a band called Creative Mind who were playing at the Go Go in Dublin. They were playing a blues gig, a lot of John Mayall Blues Breakers, really good blues. Gary was only 16 years old. Frank Murray and Paul Scully were there at the gig, you know Frank Murray don't you?

**Frank (RIP) yes, he was Thin Lizzy's tour manager, I met him a few years ago at a gig in Dublin and Gerry (Quigley) introduced me to him, the three of us chatted for a good while.**

**Brush:** Yes Frank and Paul, they were at the gig at the Go Go and they asked me to come down to the gig and have a listen.



I liked Gary's playing and at half time we all had a chat. I told Gary we were playing a gig later that night (Skid Row) and I told him to come down to our gig after he was finished.

### Were you playing close by?

**Brush:** Yes, it would have been 5 minutes away. Gary came down to hear us and we had another chat after the gig and from there he joined the band. That's how it was in Dublin, you just go along and you see somebody.

A fundraising project is underway to erect a memorial statue in Gary's honour in his hometown of Belfast. Launched in 2019, with the first sold-out Gig for Gary fundraising concert

in Belfast, the goal is to raise the statue in 4 years or less.

Belfast City Council has given approval in principle, with the location to be confirmed. Fundraising is forging ahead regardless, with online merch sales. A growing range of printed t-shirts & hoodies are available online. Gary's statue will be skillfully crafted by master figurative sculpture artist Sean McCarthy at the National Sculpture Factory in Cork City, Ireland, and cast in bronze at the finest foundry on the UK mainland.

The current target is 1,000 T-shirt sales to guarantee the first of 5 stages of construction with fundraising continuing for the remainder.

You can read more about the project and buy fundraising merch from the website:

[www.garymoorestatue.com](http://www.garymoorestatue.com)

*Gary Moore on Stage with Phil Lynott*







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Robert William  
**Gary Moore**  
April 4th 1952  
- Feb 6th 2011

*Lord of the Strings*

# J LEE AND THE HOODOO SKULLS

WORDS & PICTURE: Adam Kennedy

Surrey-based quartet J Lee and the Hoodoo Skulls brings together the best of Americana, the blues and good old fashioned rock n roll. The band, fronted by Jason Lee Barratt, are getting ready to release their sophomore album 'Beggars Soul' in early 2021. The album was produced by guitarist Harun Kotch. Drummer Wayne Riches and bass player Mike Hartnett round out the band's exceptional line-up.

Speaking of the band's history, Barratt said: "I've known the guys for a long time. And, it just seemed, I had this burning urge to do a rock and roll/blues album first, which was 'Black Moon.'" In terms of blues influences, Barratt said: "I like Larry Williams. I like some of the older stuff, like Big Joe Turner, things like that. The more traditional kind of things. Obviously, Muddy Waters. I do love Stevie Ray Vaughan and Freddie King. The track that he does 'Going Down,' I just love that. It has such a great feel to it."

Barratt was exposed to the blues by his father. He goes on to say: "I was very fortunate my Dad had a good mix of vinyl. And as a kid to be able to tap into that, because you couldn't afford your

own - kind of like, what is this? This is great! You know, and it was a nice mix." Being in a creative place, J Lee and the Hoodoo Skulls second album, 'Beggars Soul', was written and demoed in around 30 hours. The recording took place at The Chapel studio in Chichester, with the first single released from the album being the title track itself. Speaking of the starting point for the record, Barratt says: "The first track I brought to the table was 'Baby Blue', which is the next single. It has kind of more of a Rockier rock n roll feel to it. It's quite up-tempo. It's got a bit of attitude." However, the pandemic has played havoc with the release schedule for 'Beggars Soul'. Barratt says: "The release of the album and everything else was going to be done last year.

But obviously, with COVID, nobody knew what was really happening or what was going on. But, you know, it's fine for us - it's okay. It's going to come out. We haven't told anybody the date previously, so there was no kind of backtracking."

The release date for 'Beggars Soul' by J Lee and the Hoodoo Skulls is still to be confirmed, but rest assured you will hear details about it here first in the pages of Blues Matters Magazine.





## IVY GOLD

WORDS: Supplied    PICTURE: Supplied

Ivy Gold is a relatively new music band that looks set to challenge the status quo in the industry. Led by the beautiful, sensual singer, Manou, Ivy Gold comprises talented guitarist Sebastian Eder, the musical guru of the band's 4 golden boys and US-American world-class drummer Tal Bergman, the associate producer and drummer on the multi-platinum and Grammy-nominated album, "It Had To Be You, The Great American Songbook by Rod Stewart." Other members of the crew are extraordinary bassist, Kevin Moore, who has also played with several A-list acts globally, including The Persuaders, Titus Turner, Bern Nix Band, Karl Berger and Rhythm Changes, as well as Swedish keyboard player, pianist, and shape-shifter, Anders Olinder.

The decision to form Ivy Gold was born out of the desire to deliver music that takes listeners on a golden musical journey filled with surprises and excitement while staying true to delivering honest, homemade, hand-made music. The music style from Ivy Gold can be largely described as "contemporary bluesrock." The band offers an amazing mix of outstanding, versatile songs, filled with tons of emotion, energy, and musical expertise, thanks to the fantastic team of passionate music makers from diverse backgrounds. Ivy Gold is a self-made band that aims

to stay independent and free. The band manages everything by themselves, with no record label, no promotion company, or anyone involved. The album release is also timely and imperative as the world needs our message during these surreal times. Our songs deliver a strong message and we want to encourage people to have faith and trust despite the challenges. As a brand new band, we really do not have too many big achievements at the moment. However, our 60,000 views on YouTube is worth celebrating. Our goal is to help people understand our music and lyrics and hopefully make the world a better place. We hope to shine more light on the problems of society and the world and ultimately wake people up and have them look at the other side of the coin, and go back to the roots of love, harmony, and peace.

The group has dropped a couple of hits in recent times, with the likes of "This Is My Time" and "Six Dusty Winds" already doing good numbers across all major digital platforms. We recently released a single titled "Retribution" on December 18, 2020. The track is off our much-anticipated full-length album titled "Six Dusty Winds," which will be available digitally and physically on March 12, 2021. Ivy Gold aims to stay true to the motto - Out Of The Blue - For You! So we are planning on touring as soon as live shows and festivals are allowed!

<https://linktr.ee/ivygold.net>



# JOYANN PARKER

WORDS: Supplied  
PICTURE: Ian Gibbs

So who is Joyann Parker? She's a mid-life bloomer, bursting onto the scene fully grown and developed. This midwestern mother of two sings with the soul of Stax and the heartache of Patsy Cline. She writes original songs that gear a simple beauty born of truth. Every song tells a story, and every story started somewhere whether in Joyann's heart, her soul, her gut, or in the booth next to her at the restaurant where someone else's story was unfolding.

Joyann needs to know the foundations of the music she creates and sings. An Aretha song at a singing contest nearly ten years ago started her on a journey through the blues, old-school R&B, soul, old-school country and Americana music that informs and permeates her writing and her emotional delivery.

Technically, she has mastered vocal expression, tone and phrasing and moves effortlessly through a wide range of styles. So what, you may ask, so can any number of singers. The difference? Joyann does not "sound like" or imitate anyone else. She is always herself, honest and true, no matter what she's singing. There is no artifice or affected styling. When a Joyann song comes on it is instantly recognizable as hers.

Joyann Parker needs to sing the way we need to breathe. Singing is a part of her bones, her fabric, her essential being. Her gift is her song, and she shares each of them with her audiences to the fullest.

She is able to communicate a song to her



bandmates in such a way that they can see or feel what she hears in her head as the song develops. She is able to get the best out of each player and always has each player add something of themselves to each performance., playing and contributing to the song as a whole rather than just laying down a part and moving on.

So who is Joyann Parker? Joyann is an uncommon songwriter & singer who believes in the power of music to heal and who simply wants to share the gift of music with which the Creator blessed her.

[www.joyannparker.com](http://www.joyannparker.com)

I'm Lena Morris a Blues-Rock singer-songwriter-bassist. I'm French, 23 years old. but grew up in Hong Kong and now based in Brighton, UK. My journey into Blues started when I was a kid. I grew up with so much music around. Back home we listened to a lot of music: rock, pop, jazz, classic, soul, and blues of course.

At the age of 14, I was totally into Paul McCartney's music. I remember using my savings to buy my first bass, a Hofner violin. I practiced and practiced like crazy. Two months later I was having my first gig at Hong Kong's legendary live music bar: the Wanch. And the very first song I ever played live was 'Oh Darling'. How blues was that for a start! Many gigs happened through my school years. Music was all I wanted to do. I eventually graduated school, left Hong Kong and moved to Brighton.

Blues really imposed itself in my songwriting during my first year in the UK. At that time I had developed that unconditional adoration for great female singers: Rickie Lee Jones, Janis Joplin, Etta James, Joss Stone... There was that feel, a gut-grasping raw passion that simply fitted me. I guess that's how blues rubbed off on my songwriting. I didn't even notice it at first. I was writing 'Secretly Jacked' a single I released in 2017, and I remember thinking to myself: "hey... now this is what I've been looking for!". Since then, no way I'd get rid of it. I love to explore different genres, sometimes it's jazz, sometimes rock, pop, funk. But Blues always seems to be the skeleton of my music.

My single: 'Never (Is An Awfully Long Time)' in 2019 is an obvious milestone of my musical evolution into Blues-Rock. After the warm welcoming I got with that song, it was time for a bigger project. That's how I

# LENA MORRIS

WORDS: Supplied

started working on my first EP New Blood (released today 26/03/2021 and available on all streaming platforms, just saying...). New Blood's songs, some are more rock, some more soul, but they all gravitate in the Blues galaxy. Where does Blues start and where does it stop? How and where can you draw a line? If you read this and you have the answer, make sure to text me!

Now that New Blood is out, I start working on the next one. A new Blues-Rock album? Very likely! I am currently working on songs with my usual base of blues while keeping my rock influences. I also might want to twist some with Soul and a pinch of Rhythm and Blues. Something to sing my guts out anyway, so stay tuned, blues people...



# ANDREW RIVERSTONE

Andrew Riverstone is a guitarist / singer / songwriter from North Devon inspired by 70s blues pioneers Peter Green, Jimmy Page, Paul Kossoff and west coast troubadours Neil Young, Tom Petty and J.J. Cale.

He taught himself to play listening to vinyl records and was by his mid teens performing solo sets around Devon pubs and clubs.

Riverstone attended art college in South Devon before moving to London during the mid eighties to pursue a music career, where he quickly established himself as a versatile session guitarist. Andrew recorded with producers Gus Dudgeon (David Bowie, Elton John), Warne Livesey (The The), John Burns (Genesis), and co-wrote with Busta Jones from Talking Heads.

He also toured with Irish rock band Cast of Thousands on the Music for Nations label, contributing to debut album 'Passion'.

He loved the session work, but became frustrated with limited creative input, so with a heart full of song ideas committed his energy towards a new solo career.

Fast forward to the present Andrew Riverstone is now an established solo artist with four independent album releases, performances across Europe and regular tours of

**WORDS & PICTURE:** Supplied

UK music venues, art centres and festivals. He's played three shows at Glastonbury festival, been heard on BBC Radio, Sky TV, Channel 4 and MTV.

The new self titled album delves deeper into 70s blues and roots influences, with African & folk percussion enhancing gritty guitar riffs and soulful vocals.



Riverstone is an expressive lyricist tackling subjects from contemplating life choices whilst held in purgatory (Waiting On The Other Side), confronting the dark side of human nature (Chasing Out

The Shadows) kicking back against the 90s anti virtuoso guitar movement, (Guitar Solos And Other Sins) to lighter topics holding out for a brighter future (The Living Room and Sunny Monday).

Since It's release in late November 2020 the album has gained favourable reviews and play-listings on blues radio shows in the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, France, Spain, Belgium. Sweden and further afield to Australia and the USA.

For more info visit [andrewriverstone.com](http://andrewriverstone.com)



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# GOT TO MOVE FORWARD

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEREMIAH JOHNSON

WORDS: Colin Campbell   PICTURES: Dawn Wilcox

Blending Texas style blues with the vocals and expert guitar playing of Mississippi River blues encapsulates the sound of Jeremiah Johnson. This year he has released two hard hitting albums, *Heavens To Betsy* and *Unemployed Highly Annoyed*, recording his struggle in a pandemic world. A true exponent of the St Louis blues scene, here he talks to *Blues Matters* after doing a live stream event recorded for B Street Theatre in Sacramento.

Hi Jeremiah, thanks for taking time out to talk with *Blues Matters*.

Yeh doing well. Did an online concert last night seems to have gone well, not done one for a while. We recorded it at my buddy Paul Niehaus studio. He did all the audio, I did the video editing. That was us just jamming.

**It looked like a lot of fun for you, very intimate, it sounded great.**

Every time we get together it's fun for me, especially

with the way things are just now. We're at the mercy of this pandemic. It'll get better!

**Dare I ask how you are just now, sum up last year in a few sentences if you can?**

Basically, the last year has been good and bad. Good, I was at home with my baby boy who is sixteen months old now. I've had time with him that I would never have gotten. I got to be creative and make another album also, so in the end it was a successful year for me. I was able to put a new band together. On the first album I had a totally different band. I wanted to change things for a while. Especially after touring with the Blues Caravan. The shut-down gave me a chance to reflect on which direction I wanted to go for the next few



years so it helped me out.

### **Is the Blues Caravan tour 2020 with you, Whitney Shay and Ryan Perry going ahead?**

Talking recently with Thomas Ruf, all is set for September and October 2021. We're going to make up as many of the dates in the UK as we can. I'm excited about that. In the States I'm getting Festival dates set. I've never played in the UK. So many friends and fans have wanted me to play there for so long. That's one of my goals to play there. I had Covid but got over it. It's a crazy mess! Recent events have been like something out of a movie over here...

### **Growing up, what kind of music did you listen to?**

A lot would be called classic rock now! I was into British bands, Rolling stones, Eric Clapton, Cream, Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin. The main guy for me was Alvin Lee from Ten Years After, he inspired me to play, and then I found the blues guys, like BB King. I saw Alvin Lee when I was fifteen. I remember my dad took me. I told him after; this was what I want to do for the rest of my

life. I started playing guitar at six years old, but got serious about it when I was fifteen. I'm thankful I can still do this for my living.

### **You were a songwriter first though?**

Yes, it's an odd story. Before I played the guitar I played clarinet for a while. Anyway, rap music came around. I lived in the inner city of St Louis. I was a minority white kid in school. They would do rap contests in the hallways. I thought this was the coolest thing ever. So I started writing my own rap songs and had my own rhymes. I had a rap name "Jock n' Jay". I had backup singers and got good at it. So when I started to play guitar I knew how to put words together and make them into patterns to fit. It was a natural evolution for me when I got a guitar I just needed to play three chords underneath the lyrics! I started writing my own songs right away.

### **What made you choose blues music as a genre to play?**

When I was in High School I did heavy metal and rock kind of stuff. The grunge scene took over the music



scene and I remember thinking I've always loved the blues style of music. But this rock and roll thing requires you have to be lucky the music you're playing happens to be popular at the time. I thought, blues is always popular. I thought I could get better at playing that and still play it when I was an old man on stage and not look like a silly man dressed in tights! I went back to the roots; it's been a good call! In my music, you can hear rock and roll, Southern Rock. I'm not a straight ahead traditional blues player. I'm happy where I'm at; I have a sound unique to me. I do enough so it keeps the blues purists happy, I'm happy with it.

### **Your vocal style is mostly laid back with that Southern drawl?**

My Grandmother was from Kentucky, she was real Southern. You pick up those accents as a child and you can't get rid of them. Imagine you ridding your accent! It'll always be there. When I started a band the idea was to play as many Festivals as we could. I like Govt Mule and what Warren Haynes does to his musical style. I can't wait for Festivals to come back...People will reconnect with that feeling of the live music experience. It's going to be as if they never had it in their lives before. The music and people making memories there will be a rebirth of live music!

### **Do you see any differences in audiences in Europe and America?**

They both respect and love music the same way. From my experience of European crowds they don't have the music as readily available as the Americans do. American audiences take it for granted. They can go down to any bars in major cities and there are lots of blues bands playing. It's a bigger thing in Europe. I was with Mike Zito, we played a Festival in three tents. There were upwards to ten thousand people there it was packed solid. You wouldn't see that in America for blues concerts. Supply and demand I guess!

### **What makes St Louis blues style different from say Chicago or Texas?**

St Louis has always been a place where blues artists passed through. The sound we have, the way I see it, is we have a blend of Chicago and Texas. There's usually a horn section. There's more Rhythm and Blues in our style, less about guitars. My blend is a Texas style with a little bit of the St Louis style, something a bit different!

### **What's the best advice musically you have had?**

No one has been more helpful with my music career than Mike Zito. He believed in me from the beginning that I would do well in Europe and such. Best advice is to just be patient, take everything in baby steps. Don't expect things to happen overnight this is not how things work. As long as you're moving forward you're making success. Mike Zito produced Staitjacket and walked me through the process. Look at what I did in this pandemic. I didn't sit around licking my wounds and start crying. I made a new album, Ruf records released it and it made number four in the Billboard charts. I produced an hour long show for American Blues Scene.

### **Care to talk about your latest album Unemployed Highly Annoyed?**

I came up with the concept of having songs relating to Covid 19. It took ten days to make. We were in the studio for three. I said I would write these songs and see what happens! Some of those songs are literally the first time we sung them. When you listen to the record I am so proud of it, because that's us ripping it off live. You can feel the energy and the whole band sounds tied together. When finished there was no way I was going to not have this band moving forward. These guys jammed with me and we bonded. Originally it was only going to be released online. I made it to make money but needed approval from Thomas Ruf and he released it. Now I have a trio and I can

fly them to Europe for a fair price. We're a mix of jam rock, Southern rock style, with blues. Some people have compared us to a Warren Haynes style. We extend the jams out live! I buy, sell and trade guitars, some I won't get rid of. I still have my first Gibson SG bought by my dad in 1998.

### What did your dad think of you going into music?

At first he was very encouraging. When I quit college that pissed him off. From then it was why are you wasting your life with this shit, he was quite bold about it. I told him to F Off. I have not spoken to him for at least five years. He was not happy with me going into music. Occasionally when I'm doing an online thing he will donate some money and put a note saying your new band is fantastic, you made the right move by getting these guys. That was the only communication with him in the

last five years. Everything that happens in life, any adversity and challenge becomes who you are. You have to embrace it. The way my dad is with me will affect the way I bring up my son. For the most part, this pandemic has been a chance for families to be closer to each other.

### Finally, how do you keep blues music fresh for a younger generation?

Main thing is not to be a copy machine and copy old riffs. Too many guys take the same old riff and switch the words and make it their song. Blues music is a tiny niche of the music business. Young artists should blend different music styles with blues music. If that doesn't happen, all the older people in their fifties will pass and there won't be young people to hold it up. You have to try something different, to move forward, Gary Clark Junior expands his sound. He's taking the blues and mixing it with other things. Same with Warren Hayes he fuses blues with other styles. Make it fresh!

Well thanks for that Jeremiah and maybe catch you in the UK this year some time!

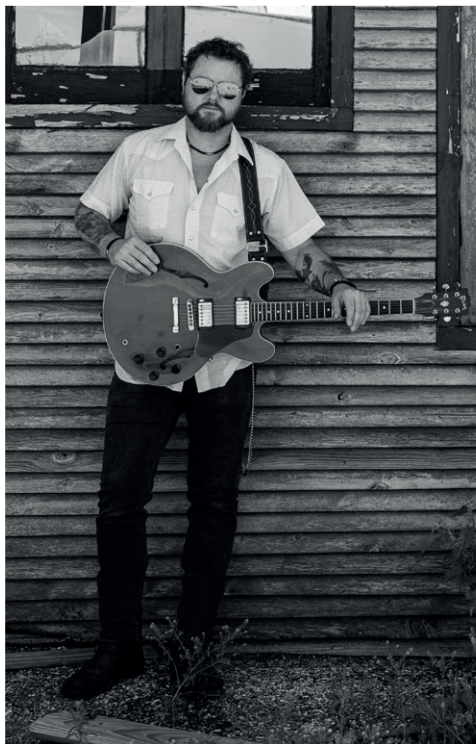
Hope so, see you soon.



For more information see:  
[jeremiahjohnsonband.com](http://jeremiahjohnsonband.com)

### DISCOGRAPHY

- Please Don't Be Dead 2018
- The Last Days Of Oakland 2016
- Fantastic Negrito 2014
- The X Factor (As Xavier) 1996





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WORDS: & PICTURES: Adam Kennedy

# KATIE KNIPP

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

**The last twelve months have been challenging to say the least. But in amongst the turmoil of the pandemic, California-based blues artist Katie Knipp has completed the recording of her now 6th studio album "The Well".**

Having had the pleasure of hearing the album in question, that old saying 'all's well that ends well' is certainly true in this respect. It's no surprise that Katie Knipp is excited about her new album and deservedly so. In her own words, Knipp declares "I'm just ready to kick ass".

Blues Matters Magazine caught up with Katie Knipp at home in The Golden State to get the lowdown on her latest offering as well as her plans for 2021.

**By your admittance, this album covers a lot of ground musically. You've got some New Orleans influences, there are some Gospel sounds, you've got the blues and the Mississippi Delta flavours. The album covers a lot of ground, but it's still blues at the heart of it. At least that's the way I feel when I listen to it. I just wondered whether you intended to showcase the different musical styles in your repertoire with this album, or did it just kind of happen that way organically?**  
It just happened that way organically. It always

does. I only make music I feel like making. And producing is super, super fun. And so, each song has its own little house of sounds and feeling. And I'm never really thinking of the whole thing as a collection. I'm always just focusing on, okay, how can we bring this story to life? And if that story happens to have a bunch of horns on it, great. If this story happens to have no electric guitar on it - oops. But it brought out the story, you know?

**The album title "The Well" is quite intriguing. Can you tell us a little bit about the idea behind the title?**

Yeah, I have a lot of water themes that got intertwined in my songs and it was sort of by accident. I didn't even realize it until my co-producer Zach pointed it out and he was like, you need to title it with something to do with water. And so, I kept going through all these different scenarios and then I settled on "The Well". Because these songs are an absolute well of emotions and ideas and experiences and creativity. Not just with me, but with the band that all just put their magic touch on this. I had to pinch myself in the studio when I heard each one of them contribute - it was incredible. And so, it's just a well of creative ideas and feelings and some water in there too.

**In terms of the lockdown and the pandemic. How much did that impact the writing and**



**the recording of the album?**

It definitely impacted the recording. It surprised me because our band's last show and gathering in any room together was in March. So, when we came back into the studio, all I did was email them solo recordings of my songs, that they had never heard and I said, do your thing, be you and let's get together in the studio and see what happens. And it was almost frightening because our first run-through as a band on "The Gospel of Good Intentions" was the track that we kept for the album. So, we didn't even practise it together as a group, we just ran through the song to see what would happen and that's what we kept. And I think, the pandemic sort of benefited us, in that the high level of emotions and care and gratitude of finally getting together really showed when we hit record. It was just completely natural.

**The song title that grabs me the most is "Chamomile and Cocaine" because that sounds like an interesting combination. It's quite a funky number with a little bit of tongue in cheek lyricism in there as well. Can you tell us a little bit about that song in particular?**

Yeah, first and foremost, I am not selling drugs and I do not do cocaine. It is strictly a description of my personality. Like I'm calming, but I can also be explosive. It's the first song I've ever written where I'm telling everybody, here I am, I'm coming at ya - this is it. This is what you're getting and I'm going to make you feel all of the things. So, as far as writing is concerned, it was the most fun. I remember coming up with just a fun piano part in the be-

“ I JUST FEEL LIKE IT'S ONE OF THE MOST SPECIAL PLACES ON THE PLANET ”

**In terms of emotions, how are you feeling about the actual album release itself? Are you excited? Are you nervous? Are you curious?**

I feel amazing. I feel like I'm sitting on a volcano that's about to erupt and the lava is gumbo, and the gumbo is all this killer music, killer styles and people. I appreciate when people like it a lot, but I'm not waiting on people's feedback. I'm just waiting to get it out there and to get back on stage and share it because it's just super exciting. So yeah, I'm not nervous at all, I'm just ready to kick ass.

ginning and in the end, I'm just kind of pounding on it. And I truly felt like a kid on a trampoline from the start of writing it to the end of recording it. When we brought in Keith's Hammond and Otis' saxophone and just the funky groove of Neil and Zach on drums and bass - it was 100% kid on a trampoline.

**"Sad Eyed Lover" is quite a raucous number right at the start of the album. And immediately that first song, it just kind of grabs your attention. It's got a Bourbon Street vibe about it. I just wondered, have you always been a fan of the New Orleans sound?**  
Yeah, and I'm excited to finally work with

people that get it right. Because I don't have time to learn the clarinet. I played it in the fourth grade, but I'm going to leave that to the people that have been playing it now for 40 years. I've only had the pleasure of going there one time, but it's truly transformed my musical journey. Not just the trip there, but the people that I study like Allen Toussaint, Dr John and Professor Longhair. And then there are people like Trombone Shorty. I just have the greatest musical experiences listening to those guys, as well as talking to some of them before they passed away. And yeah, I just feel like it's one of the most special places on the planet.

**One of my favourite tracks on the album is "Better Me", which I think is more of an old school blues song. It's got some nice slide guitar, which I'm always a fan of. What was your inspiration for that song in particular?**

Yeah, that's a story about a woman that's being abused, who is trapped by money. So, I was listening to this story on NPR about how a lot of men out there, unfortunately, who are abusive will slowly make it so that the woman is completely dependent on them and unable to get out of the situation. So, money is a big thing. And then if they have children, that's even a bigger thing because she's wondering, well, how is she going to feed her kids? If she leaves him, maybe I just take the abuse, or in the story, she entertains the thought of, if I don't kill him first, I'm going to die first. Um, that didn't come out right. But anyway, you know what I mean? And so, it's a very sad story. And I feel for these women because there's a lot of them out there that are silenced because they feel like they have no way out. So as far as the storyline, that one probably is the darkest one on the record.



**You mentioned that you've got some big news about the album. Can you share with us just a little bit of detail about that?**

Yeah, I just signed with a major label for distribution. So instead of me doing all that myself, they're going to take the reins and allow me to be less of a needle in a haystack. And what's cool is the company is run by all women and that's a new experience for me. They're incredible people and they partner with incredible people and the future is quite bright. I'm very excited about it. I signed yesterday.

**Have you got any loose plans of how 2021 is going to work out with the album release and everything or is it very much just a case of waiting to see how things pan out?**

Yeah, it looks as if by September we're going to be able to fully do concerts again. And with all the things there are to do with releasing this record I feel like the time will go by pretty quickly. I'm just so excited about all of this and

hopefully getting back on the Billboard Charts and stuff that there's a light at the end of the tunnel. We've got the vaccine and it's a lot brighter of a future than we were seeing over the summertime - that's for sure.

**"The Well" by Katie Knipp will be released on Friday 12th March. You can purchase the album online via Bandcamp, Amazon and iTunes.**

**For further details visit  
katieknipp.com**





**ARIELLE**





# ANALOG GIRL in a DIGITAL WORLD

WORDS: Adam Kennedy   PICTURES: Caitlin Brady

**Arielle is getting ready to release her ninth album 'Analog Girl in a Digital World' on Friday 7th May.**

This title perfectly sums up a 21st-century artist, whose musical influences date back to the golden age of rock and roll of the 1960s and 70s.

Speaking of the release Arielle says that "The new album takes you on a journey through the trials, tribulations, and confusion of an old-school artist in a fast-paced world."

The US originating artist, who has recently been spending time between the States and London, released "Peace of Mind" - the first single to be taken from latest offering in February, with the follow up "Inside & Outside" set for release on Friday 16th April. But the excitement doesn't stop there for Arielle, with an exciting collaboration in the works with rock legend Brian May.

**Queen's Brian May Discusses - "The Arielle" - The Artist's Signature Axe which is Coming Soon via Brian May Guitars**

Recent news has emerged that Arielle has collaborated with non-other than her good friend and Queen legend Brian May to release a somewhat majestic signature guitar. "This is the very first guitar that Brian May guitars has ever offered that is not based on my original Red Special. Designed by and named after Arielle, it's a new dimension," says Brian May.

In years gone by, Arielle embarked on a journey whilst developing her trademark guitar "Two-Tone" that paralleled the creation of Dr May's iconic "Red Special" which certainly sparked the interest of the Queen guitarist. May goes on to say: "Arielle is an awesome musician. She is a truly phenomenal player, with an ability to produce the most beautiful tones as well technical mastery. Of course, it is in the fingers, but I was keen to discover



how she had fashioned her own instrument to achieve her sound. We collaborated in making the Arielle a new mission to guitarists everywhere - to open up a new door to excellence!" Having been friends for the last 14 years May has nothing but praise for Arielle. "Arielle's playing reaches places I never knew existed," says Brian. "I believe this guitar will do the same."

But how does "The Arielle" hold up in the eyes of the guitar legend himself. Brian says "To understand why this guitar was irresistible to me, you have to hold her in your hands. The guitar is light, and smooth and agile. She sings like a bird."

Blues Matters Magazine recently caught up with Arielle in the States, to get the lowdown on her forthcoming album, the release of her new guitar "The Arielle" via Brian May Guitars and her plans for the rest of 2021.

**So how are you feeling about your new album? It's imminent now with a release date of the 7th of May?**

I'm feeling really good. I recorded it in 2019, so it's been a while now. And so, it's kind of funny to

listen back. I don't typically listen to my own stuff. Maybe just for mixing purposes before it's done and then I'll go like a year without hearing it. Or, you know, if I'm checking some vinyl, or any sort of merch - but I listened to it yesterday. Yeah, I'm proud of it. I think it's the most mature thing that I've created as far as just a compilation of songs.

There are some things that have changed now since it's been a bit over a year, but it's definitely inspired me to just get this one out and get people to hear it so I can work on the next one. It's my first actual concept album. So instead of just being like what I thought were my strongest songs, every song has an order and even the way that they transitioned into each other, like what notes are being played was thought out. So, it was a different approach to creating an album. And of course, it was my first time recording with tape too. So that was really fun. There were a lot of fun things about this one that I've never been able to do. So, I'm proud of it.

**With the album, you recorded it half tape and half digital. Did you start recording it in digital and then say it would be fun to do it on tape? Or**

**was it just due to the limitations of the studios that you recorded in, as you recorded between Nashville and Austin? Was this approach intentional or did it just kind of happen organically?**

Well, that's a good question. It was a bit organic. I never meant to do half and half. I definitely meant to do tape. And then I had this one engineer/producer friend that I've always wanted to work with in Austin, but never did. And I have some musicians that I wanted to play with. So instead of using all my budget on the Nashville musicians and the studio cost - the whole collection of that is extremely expensive. I decided to move. Actually, the guy Frenchie, his studio, "The Bubble" - the studio that I used, he talked me into it. He was like, Arielle, I know you want to do tape and you want to do analog, but it's not just the tape it's also, who's behind the tape and the way that you approach digital. And I was like, alright, prove that to me. And he did.

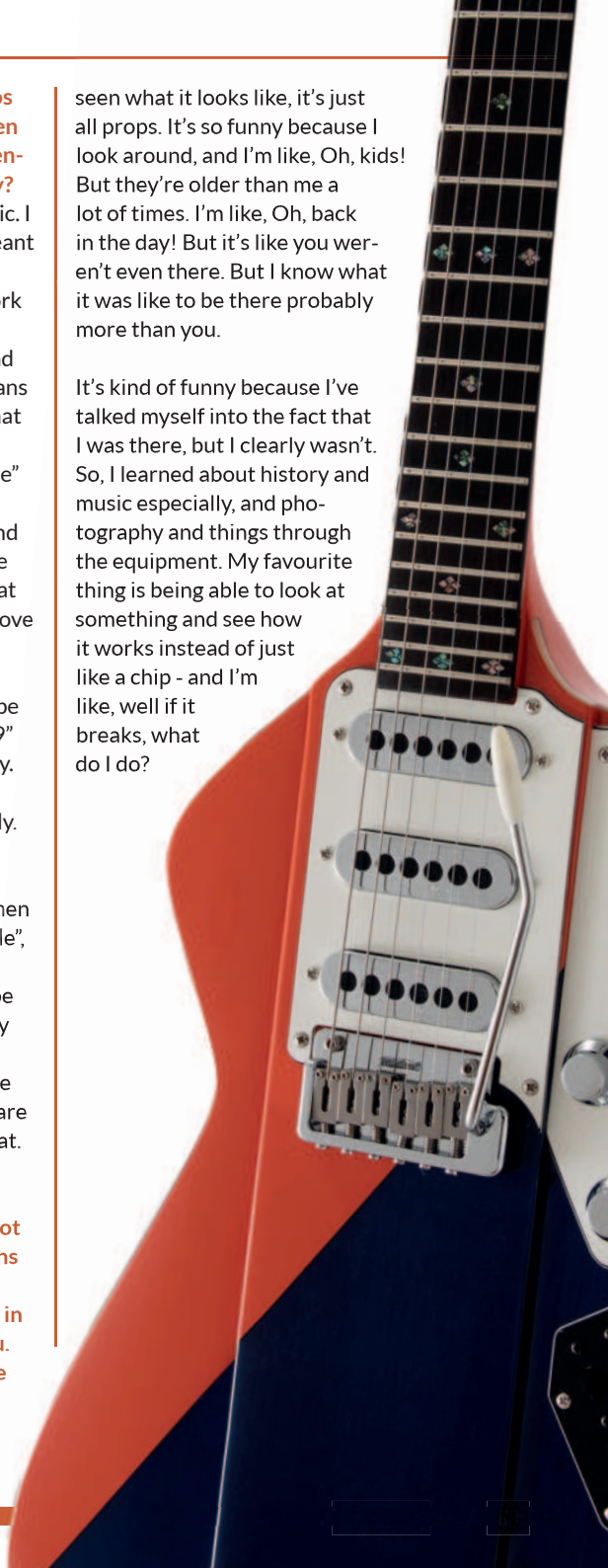
So, it was kind of a fair comparison - analog tape with Chris Mara who owns "Welcome To 1979" in Nashville, who is a diehard tape machine guy. He actually mods tape machines, old tape machines and makes them able to process digitally. So, you can record to tape and then of course bring the analog into digital, which is really fascinating. So, he does all those things. And then also my friend, Chris in Austin with "The Bubble", who has an analog heart and loves all of the stuff that I love, but he doesn't like splicing tape and doesn't like the gear and all that stuff. They both have pros and cons and things that I like and things that I don't. And I think I came to the conclusion that it really doesn't matter, there are other elements that matter a lot more than that. It was kind of my own research study.

**The title itself, it really sums you up. Having got to know you a little bit over the last six months and seeing all of your gadgets and props at home and things like that. I think 'Analog Girl in a Digital World' is the perfect analogy for you. Was it just an obvious choice to go with a title like that? How did it come to fruition?**

Well, yeah. I think I was at my London place and I had nothing in it, but I mean, you've

seen what it looks like, it's just all props. It's so funny because I look around, and I'm like, Oh, kids! But they're older than me a lot of times. I'm like, Oh, back in the day! But it's like you weren't even there. But I know what it was like to be there probably more than you.

It's kind of funny because I've talked myself into the fact that I was there, but I clearly wasn't. So, I learned about history and music especially, and photography and things through the equipment. My favourite thing is being able to look at something and see how it works instead of just like a chip - and I'm like, well if it breaks, what do I do?





Even if I don't know how to fix that, I love getting to look at it and seeing how it works. It makes me appreciate it a lot more.

So, yeah, I think it came from the feeling of being actually sad sometimes, pre-COVID, of course, this was done. That I didn't belong. I mean, there were a lot of weird things going on in the sixties and seventies too - like civil rights stuff, racism stuff and sexism stuff. There were a lot of things that were not great. And for that reason, we should not go back to that time period. What I'm referring to is the music. And I think there was some magical stuff happening in all genres of music during that time period, as well as many other time periods. But the sixties and seventies and the really early eighties are the ones that I've latched onto.

So yeah, it was just supposed to capture my feelings at that time. Every song has an element of I guess that story for me and how that feeling of I'm this analog chick and people laugh at me - they call me grandma. I'm just like I'll take my old little Polaroid thing and I'm like, hold on and they'll take a picture. I'm like, oh, I only had 10 photos in there. And you know, you don't understand the film was like twenty-five dollars. It's crazy. Oh, you can't just do that. So, there are things that are so impractical that I love, but just don't really fit into society and all the pains of that and the journey that I've taken to figure that out about myself.

**The Brian May guitar that's been announced now - it's called "The Arielle" and it's the first guitar manufactured by Brian May Guitars, outside of his Red Special line. How does that feel to have had a guitar, which is being pushed by Brian himself? I know you are good friends with him, and you've worked together in the past, but it must feel pretty special to have that association and relationship with Brian May.**

Yeah, I mean it sounds really weird, especially because of COVID that we can't celebrate it. Maybe the way that at least I wish we could. It almost feels like it's not real because I haven't been able to see anyone and the reactions. I think what's

going to really make it real for me is when I see other people owning my guitar. I mean, there's nobody in the world who has one other than Brian May Guitars - they're the only one. And they don't even have a Two-Tone, they have The Arielle. There's nobody in the world that has one. So, I had this fear that before the guitar would come out, I would see somebody with the guitar and be like - you ripped off my guitar. But it'll be so weird to see other people playing my guitar. Because it's been 14 years and I've never seen it. So, I think I'll be like, wow!

And as far as it being Brian May, I would tell those story that he's the reason why I play the guitar. When I was six years old, I saw a video of Brian May live at Wembley and people look at Freddie mercury, but I looked at the tall curly-haired dude, with the cool guitar. And I was like, what is that? Because I want to do that. And ever since I was that age, I knew we were going to be friends and I'm not sure. And he laughs at me because I'm like it was meant to be, we're like soulmates. He's like, yeah, maybe and I'm like, no we are. This is our 14th year of friendship. So, it's been a long time and I'm so honoured and I'm humbled.

And at the same time, I've been going into some groups and talking to people because they have questions about what's different about my guitar Two-Tone versus The Arielle guitar. And I was like, whatever you see, that's different - it was Brian. That's all you need to know. And you can imagine all of us at a table and there's Barry who runs the company, and then there's Brian's guitar tech Pete, and there's Brian and me and we're sitting there. And Brian's like, I don't like the pickguard on Two-Tone, but the black triangle that I have. But I'm like, it's the triangle. He's like, Nah, you are going to have to let it go Arielle. I'm like, alright. So, a lot of the things that have changed are because we were collaborating and I'm very stubborn. So, we had to make everybody happy, and that experience was very humbling and hard to do because I'm a control freak, but it was really fun.

**What's the plan for the rest of the year?**

Well, I'm working on some new music, which was hard to do in between, since we were doing press for this, but now I can kind of focus on more new music. Touring is probably not going to happen because of COVID. I know everybody's moving their schedule back to 2022. So, that's kind of a bummer. What my booking agent is looking into is seeing what we can do as far as maybe guitar clinics - more socially distanced kind of crowd controlled, maybe with 40 or 50 people to talk about the guitars. It would see me on the road. I think that might be a good thing that we're looking into right now, depending on the climate of what's going on in the UK versus the US. As you know, it's kind of a day-by-day thing.

And then the other thing that I'm working on, which is really, really fun is alongside the guitar I've been a little bit traumatized actually, the fact that I feel responsible for cutting down all these trees. I mean, a lot of it we're using, Limba wood for the body - Limba is a tree from Africa. And then we are also using Ebony. It is a very endangered and rare tree because the Ebony is for the fingerboard. It's that really beautiful, typically black wood. Sometimes people stain it because it can be dark brown, but it's very expensive and very rare because the tree itself takes 60 to 80 years to mature. So, if you plant one now, you're never going to see it fully mature. So, I got really disturbed by that because I was like, oh my gosh, how many trees, if I were to calculate, have I personally been responsible for? And that freaked me out so much. I was talking to my friend, and during COVID I've been in the US, just because I didn't want to be in another country, depressed by myself in lockdown - it's just not a good idea. I bought a piece of land, just inexpensive land, nothing on it really. And we've been from seed planting tonewood trees, and by tonewood the specific trees that people cut down for instruments such as Koa from Hawaii. You have Mahogany, which can be from Florida and a bunch of other places as well. Rosewood from Brazil, and there's also Indian Rosewood. So, a lot of these climates can be replicated in Florida. So, I'm also trying to grow Ebony. I can't find Limba seeds, which is what the guitars are made of,

which is so frustrating.

But anyway, I have so far planted six trees. I'm trying to get to 25. I just bought a hundred more seeds, but before you plant them, they need to be of a certain size. So, I get them maybe a foot and a half before I put them outside and put them in the lot. So, I'm starting a nonprofit, it's going to be called the Tonewood Forest. And what I would like to do is to have pieces of land all around the world where I could grow indigenous trees to the area that we cut down. So, in colder climates like Alaska or something like that, we could grow Sitka Spruce for what most people use for acoustics. And then, we could get a plot of land in Africa - and plant just Limba and protect them and educate people and kids.

We're looking at plots in Nashville. So, we could have trees that can grow in that climate and show people, musicians, these trees and understand what we're doing, because it's kind of scary. But when you get to see these little things, I grow them hydroponically, which is kind of hilarious - I have an indoor growing area because it's really hard to do. They can take like a year to sprout. So that's my mission actually on the site is growing trees - tonewood trees. I'm like, look, it's a baby mahogany. And I told Brian and he freaked out because that's what his guitar is made out of. So that's the other thing, I've been growing trees to make up for my tree cutting.

Arielle's new album  
'Analog Girl In A Digital  
World' will be released  
Friday 7th May 2021  
and can be pre-ordered  
from [www.arielle.store](http://www.arielle.store)



Arielle's new signature guitar  
The BMG Arielle is released March  
2021 and can be pre-ordered from  
[shop.brianmayguitars.co.uk](http://shop.brianmayguitars.co.uk)





# YOU HAVE TO KEEP EVOLVING

## AN INTERVIEW WITH GHALIA VOLT

WORDS: Colin Campbell   PICTURES: Kaelan Barowsky

**I** had the honour of interviewing Belgian blues musician Ghalia for Issue 111. She had just released her second album for Ruf Records “Mississippi Blend” and things were definitely on the rise for her as an artist and front person in her band.

Alas now like a lot of musicians her hopes of tours and playing with her band vanished into the mire in March 2020 when the Covid pandemic took hold. Never one to miss a challenge, Ghalia has reinvented herself and gone solo. Her latest album, One Woman Band sees her playing all instruments, kick, snare drum, cigar box guitar, tambourine and vocals. We explore the roots of this album here, which is a real blues adventure, recorded in the legendary Royal Sound Studios in Memphis and Co-Produced by Lawrence Boo Mitchell. A lot to catch up on....

**Hi Ghalia, good of you to take time to talk to Blues Matters. Not in New Orleans this time though?**

Here in Belgium; Brussels, the weather is ugly. Hoping not everything gets cancelled!

**You have been very busy this last year despite the rigors of a pandemic; let's talk about the new album and what made you want to make a total solo career pathway?**

You have to look forward and create. I've been practicing a lot and writing and

collaborating with other artists. Did some virtual Blues N' Roll sessions with Monster Mike Welch and Jeremiah Johnson. There, I practiced my one woman band set up. In small Clubs I've always played solo or busking. I added a foundation of bass and rhythm with a stomp box and tambourine. Next I got a drum kit and added a hi hat. Then played slide guitar and singing at the same time! I still had gigs in Memphis and Mississippi to do before the lockdown started. I went on the road with this set up to see what feedback I got, it was all good. I came back home and told Ruf I wanted to record a new album. This was after travelling a month by train with Amtrak. I did eighteen states by myself with a very heavy suitcase, backpack and a guitar. Crossed the swamps to the Ocean, to the deserts and onto the bright lights of Chicago, it was amazing. It was all inspiring and I wrote most of the titles on the album being on the train in a pandemic. It was like a road trip.

**Talk about how the concept of this album came about, there was a journey involved?**

I came back home and told Ruf I wanted to record a new album. This was after travelling a month by train with Amtrak. I did eighteen states by myself with a very heavy suitcase, backpack and a guitar. Crossed the swamps to the Ocean, to deserts and onto the bright lights of Chicago, it was amazing. It was all inspiring and I wrote most of the titles on the

album being on the train in a pandemic. It was like a road trip. I wrote some songs and finished ones I had in my scratch book. I put the melodies to the lyrics and went to Memphis to record the album. It was intense work and hours of practice.



**You got to record the album at Royal Sound Studios in Memphis, how did that come about?**

I wanted to record in those old studios. I got to do last album Mississippi Blend at Zebra Ranch in Mississippi. This time I thought Memphis would be ideal. I work 300% to get something done. I'm never bored! I talked to

Luther Dickinson and then contacted Boo Mitchell. He seemed an amazing person. So many great musicians recorded at the studio, from Bobby "Blue" Bland to Al Green, legends! Knowing Boo, who grew up with these people, the music comes natural, and it's in him! That's how I picked the studio. I played every instrument live. Only one song on the album is overdubbed with drum and guitar. It is natural, traditional old school approach. Two takes and away we go!

**One Woman Band is an evolution of your blues style moving on with the raw Mississippi feel, how does that make you feel?**

If the pandemic didn't happen this may not have happened. The future of music looks bad. Venues going broke. You're not going to fill a room because there's only 25% capacity; money's not going to be there. This project seemed a logical step. Musically, I'm happy, it's my sound. I put my touch to

***"It was intense work and hours of practice"***

it. I go through bass amp and guitar amp at the same time. I need a big fat sound. You can feel the bass between the kick drum and the roots of the chords. I hate most distortions. When I recorded, I only had a tuner. Distortion on the record comes from cranking an amp. We added a Fender amp, no pedals. Don't think Magic Sam added a fuzz or distortion! I tried to be natural, that was the goal.

**How much did busking in Brussels help you in your decision to go solo?**

Busking is the best school. You have to grab people's attention in a second. You force your performance. You go through the roughest times.



# THE VIPER ROOM





***“It feels good but  
you can’t be a one  
woman band show,”***



**Do you still feel a connection with the audience doing live stream shows?**

It's not the same but yes. It feels good but you can't be a one woman band show, watch the people's comments on the screen. It's still a show. It's still good. It has to be as good as a show.

**Tell us about the production, how long did it take, was it all one take songs, how do you feel about the production?**

I got to the Royal Studios with an idea of what the sound would be. I would play everything live. Atmosphere is part of production too. You have to make sure the lyrics can be understood. The sound and mix, I worked with Lawrence Mitchell on that. Boo Mitchell was laid back and encouraging, he was dancing in the booth. Everything was cool, but you only had two days to make it happen!

**Any inspirations for the song writing on the album, you got a favourite track?**

On "Last Minute Packer", I follow the traditional blues approach; A B E. For the rest, it's all me. I have different ways of writing songs. The second track, Espiritu Papago is about that train trip. I had an adventure in Arizona. You get in trouble in the desert what do you do? It's romanced but... I imagined it to be like John Lee Hooker on mushrooms lost in the desert. It has spiritual vibes, very psychedelic. Monster Mike Welch and Dean Zuccherro are on the album, I couldn't resist inviting them! They bring a certain difference to the feel of the album. Mike played two solos on two different songs; Evil Thoughts and last track, Just One More Time. He has his own studio. Don't forget this is a Corona album, he did his part there. Dean played on Espiritu and Just One More Time. There's always rawness to my sound.

**What do we not know about Ghalia Volt that you can tell us here?**

I'm a very good cook! Pastry, salad, Spanish, Belgian cookery. I like my Belgian beers. Miss them when I'm in America. I like my family and friends. I like to love people and play my music, it feels good!

**If not a musician, what would you be?**

I'd be a cook. I could listen to music all day and cook and eat!

**Finally, do you make New Year resolutions?**

I don't even know it's 2021, I'm so busy. Just did a music video. Never have time to rest and think what I've achieved. The last seven years have gone so fast. 2020 I had a whole tour. We had a blast. Then enjoyed Mardi Gras in New Orleans, recorded an album, it wasn't all bad! I want to remember that year as something positive. I wrote, Why Don't You Sell Your Children on my last album. It's the same shit going on now. I hate how money is the wheel to every wagon. I'm disgusted that stores are having sales but no music venues are open, why? Hopefully 2021 will be more for normal people. You have to be careful what you say though. Live music won't be the same for the next few years unfortunately. People will not trust as much. Hoping one day we'll be like before, but you can't take anything for granted. Let's be good to each other and trust each other and we have a bright future! Remember it's not good but it's not bad and if it's not bad then that's pretty good!

[ghaliavolt.com](http://ghaliavolt.com)



## DISCOGRAPHY

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| • One Woman Band                             | 2021 |
| • Mississippi Blend                          | 2019 |
| • With The Mamas Boys:<br>Let The Demons Out | 2017 |

SAI GADDO





Curtis Salgado has been in the blues business since 1980 when he teamed up with a certain Robert Cray and started playing harmonica in Robert's band. From then on the rest, as they say, is history. I recently chatted with Curtis about all things musical. From playing harmonica with Robert Cray to being the inspiration behind the Blues Brothers movie and quite a lot more.

WORDS: Stephen Harrison   PICTURES: Jessica Keaveny & Laura Carbone

**How have you been doing during lockdown?  
You have released the album *Damage Control*  
which I managed to listen to this morning.**

First of all, I started writing the record in 2017 and as you know it's record tour, record tour, you've got to put out a product. Promoters are not going to hire you unless you have something to put out, so here we are. The first song that I wrote was, You're Going To Miss My Sorry Ass, but there are two songs on the album that have a rockabilly sound and when they take shape it kind of reminds me of this person or that person so I just wanted to make a couple of the songs real rockabilly sounding. I started recording the songs in 2019 and went to three different recording studios, using three different rhythm sections. One of the reasons was they are all my friends, and the other is they are all great musicians. So I have five songs from Nashville, five songs from Los Angeles, and the rest I recorded with Kid Anderson who is a wonderful musician. You can record an album anywhere but it's the people you put on it that counts.

**What first inspired you to become a musician in the blues, soul, and gospel?**

The same as everybody else, it's the same story. I have an older brother and older sister, and my mum and dad were very hip, very open-minded people who had a large jazz collection. So I grew up listening to Fats Waller and Buck Johnson and all those New Orleans guys. And also I was listening to Count Basie. So, my sister and brother were bringing in this jazz stuff as well so I was surrounded by it. The only thing that

interested me was music. Then one day my brother brought home a Paul Butterfield record. It didn't register to me at first but then I noticed that black guys and white guys are in the same band. It just hit me and I wanted to know why. I loved the history of it all, jazz and skiffle that I would find out later, but it was that first Paul Butterfield album that set me off. Have you ever heard the Jelly Roll Morton interviews? Man, he starts talking about the blues in the 1800s, so the history is all around us. One day my sister brought home a record called, I Hate To See You Go by Little Walter on Chess records. Little Walter had just died and it's probably in my all-time top five blues records of all time. I still play it to this day

**How did you become involved with playing with the Robert Cray Band?**

I was in a band called The Nighthawks, there are a million bands called The Nighthawks, okay, and we were a good band. But I'm in the North-West, in Oregon, which is not really blues central. I lived in Eugene, Oregon, which is a lumber town, with lots of lumber mills all over the place. The University of Oregon was a cool place that had a lot of bands rolling through. Robert Cray moved down from Washington to Eugene and I heard about it through a friend. So, Robert Cray and his bass player, Richard Cousins are walking down the street and I'm like, wow two black guys into the blues? Because around that time, 73-74 a lot of black musicians were not into the blues. So I ended up meeting with them, and Richard says do you wanna jam? Robert didn't want to jam, but I said yeah sure, so off we

went to jam. I was playing harmonica, Robert already had a harmonica player in the band but the rest of his band were still upstate so it was just us. They began to hang around my house and we just hit it off, and all of a sudden, I'm in the band. The guys in my band The Nighthawks didn't want to do music as a career so I ended up joining the Robert Cray Band because they wanted to make a career out of it and the other guys didn't. I was with Robert for about eight years, we parted company around 1982. In the early years, Robert was realized, he was the same then as he is now, always on the mark, always in pitch. When you watch him play, it's like enjoying a good meal.

**Is it true that you were the inspiration behind John Belushi in the making of *The Blues Brothers* movie?**

The first record is dedicated to me. (Briefcase Full Of Blues). There is an interview with John Belushi on my website where he says, I got this shit from Curtis. When I met John Belushi I was playing a gig with my band The Nighthawks in a hotel alongside the Robert Cray Band and the movie is being filmed in town. Here's the thing, I didn't know who John Belushi was. On a Saturday night, I'd be playing with The Nighthawks at gigs around town, didn't own a TV set, so had

no idea what Saturday Night Live was at all. So, I open up the show and a drug dealer comes up to me and grabs me and says, Belushi wants to meet you. And I'm like, what's a Belushi? And he keeps saying to me, Belushi wants to meet you. The song ends, the set ends, and he's still saying Belushi wants to meet you. So, I eventually meet him, we shake hands, and he says to me, I love your music, you remind me so much of a friend of mine, he plays harmonica too. His name is Dan Ackroyd. So, he called me up about four days later and say's lets have dinner and bring all your records. Then he came to my band and I played him Soul Man, and virtually taught him that right there. I taught him my act. At first, he wasn't into blues music, he was listening to Blue Oyster Cult and AC/DC, but it was Dan Ackroyd who was really into the blues at that time, collecting records and honing his craft in the blues. He was listening to a band from Toronto that had two brothers in it and who got an original song on that album, Briefcase Full Of Blues, called Shotgun Blues. And in the film Cab Calloway is the mentor for Jake and Elwood and his name in the film is Curtis. That was for me.

**Which harmonica player has been the biggest influence on your playing?**

Little Walter for sure. I love Stevie Wonder and Junior Wells, but the one that opened the door for me was Paul Butterfield. Then my sister bought me a Little Walter album. The thing about Little Walter is, he's not the greatest singer but he's true Chicago. He's playing the harmonica with this amazing tone and the lines that he's playing are saxophone. What he did was listen to Louis Jordan, who at the time when he came out was like the black version of Elvis Presley.

**What prompted you to start recording with Alligator Records?**

When I left Robert Cray I joined Room Full Of Blues in 1984 and I got fired from there because the leader of the band was jealous of me. I blew up on stage Then I got an offer from



Rounder Records who offered me 8,000 bucks. Then a guy by the name of Charlie Fash knocked on my door. This guy used to work for Mercury Records and handle James Brown, Dinah Washington, and Roger Miller. So basically they saw me play and then offered to sign me and pay me 40,000 bucks. 8,000 or 40,000. I made a record called Curtis Salgado And The Stilettos which sold around 60,000 copies. I made six albums for Shanachie Records who then decided to let me go. The last record we made for them was called Clean Getaway. I eventually came across an old friend of mine, handed him a promo recording, who took it to Alligator Records and they loved it. I feel very privileged to be here. So this is what I'm all about right now with this record. It's the story of my life up to now.

**When everything is back to normal, whatever normal is, do you plan on touring the UK and Europe?**

Oh, I'd love to, but nobody is planning anything right now. I mean, if you were a promoter right now, you've gotta send me a deposit that I may have to send back so nobody is doing that anymore until they figure it out. Until we all know the health status is safe for the audience and the band we are in limbo. I think it could be 2022 before things get back to anything like normal. Doing a live stream thing is not the same as performing in front of an audience. There is no connection. And then it's like someone will make a comment on the screen about this or about that and things start to appear on the screen. So we'll see what happens and keep our fingers crossed.

**Well, thank you so much for your time, Curtis. It's been an absolute pleasure chatting with you. I hope to see you perform live in the UK before too long.**

It has been my pleasure,  
Stephen. Keep in touch.



[www.curtissalgado.com](http://www.curtissalgado.com)



## DISCOGRAPHY

|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| • Damage Control                 | 2021 |
| • Rough Cut                      | 2018 |
| • The Beautiful Lowdown          | 2016 |
| • Soul Shot                      | 2012 |
| • Clean Getaway                  | 2008 |
| • Strong Suspicion               | 2004 |
| • Soul Activated                 | 2001 |
| • Wiggle Outta This              | 1999 |
| • Hit It 'N' Quit It             | 1997 |
| • More Than You Can Chew         | 1995 |
| • Curtis Salgado & The Stilettos | 1991 |







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# GRAINNE DUFFY



PICTURE: Rob Blackham



Grainne (it's pronounced Groin-ya) Duffy has a singing voice of a pain-soaked, worn-down American blues woman, but when she speaks to BM's Andy Hughes, it's with a pure and musical Irish lilt that sounds like it's bathed in the pure waters of the River Liffey. Nursing to sleep the newest arrival to her family, a baby girl, Grainne talked about her love of blues music, her desire to get back out on the road, and the painful consequences of playing a Gibson Les Paul Guitar.

WORDS: Andy Hughes   PICTURES: As Credited

**There is such a contrast between your singing voice and your speaking voice, it sounds like two different personalities.**

That's an interesting observation. I put it down to the fact that when we were growing up, my dad was a big fan of American country music and rock and roll so we all grew up listening to that, and I guess absorbing the accent without actually realising it at the time. We didn't have a television, but our mother always encouraged us to listen to music.

We had a record-player and we could each get a record for our birthday and a record at Christmas, so over time we amassed a really good record collection between us. I listened to Madonna because that's what teenage girls loved, and my two sisters and I developed a huge love of Fleetwood Mac. We adored the voices of Stevie Nicks and Christine McVie. We also loved Irish bands as well, Thin Lizzy and Horslips and Calnnad. So, while I really loved the 'second version' of Fleetwood Mac, I started looking back into their history and I heard Peter Green and I was absolutely spell-bound by his voice and his guitar.

**Did you get to see Peter Green play live?**

I didn't, I'm sorry to say. He played a blues festival not far from where I lived growing up, and I got some money and bought a ticket, but I was only about thirteen, and when my mother found out, she wouldn't let me go, so I never did get to see him. I spoke to some people who saw him play around that time, and apparently he was not what he was, there were a lot of other musicians on stage with him and he

played and sang very little, so maybe I would have been sad not to see him as he was in his heyday. But that's how it is sometimes, any musician and band can have an off-night. It's all about the chemistry and the interaction with the audience, and sometimes the room doesn't feel right, or the sound is not good, or the band are tired, or it simply doesn't connect for some reason. Musicians are human, and it doesn't always work how you want it to, but you have to accept that as part of being a musician and playing your music out on stage.

**When did you realise that you could sing?**

That was really a kind of evolution really. I started out singing in the choir in school, and when I was about eleven, my headmaster must have heard something that he thought could be developed, and he put me with two other girls to sing harmonies. I loved that, I really enjoyed listening to different vocal lines and trying them out and seeing how they worked together and fit into a song. From there I was asked to sing solo, and that really did wonders for my confidence as a singer. One of my sisters was really into her music and she was going out with a drummer.

They used to play Pretenders records and Stones records, and I would sneak them into my room and listen to them and sing along and pretend I was actually the singer. That was good for me, finding out how my voice worked, and finding my range and so on. I used to sing Ronnettes songs because I loved their harmonies and I heard that Amy Winehouse was influenced by them, so I loved their sound. I was trying everything, it might me country one

day, rock and roll the next, all sorts of styles and sounds.

### What was your first band?

I joined a band with my sisters, we were acoustic, and I loved singing Revolution by Tracy Chapman and If It Makes You Happy by Sheryl Crow, those were my favourites. When my sisters found that being in a band was not for them, I joined another band with Paul Sherry who is now my husband, and that was more blues based. Then I started listening to artists like Etta James and Bonnie Raitt and I worked on how you can use your voice to express the emotion of the song, and how to use phrasing, and just generally honing my craft as a singer.

### And what about playing guitar?

I was quite a late bloomer with the guitar, I played acoustic mainly and I adored Fleetwood Mac's Need Your Love So Bad, and my brother-in-law taught me the chords for that, and then I learned to play Samba Pa Ti by Santana, and again it was a case of working out the technical aspects, pentatonics and blues solos and learning the various aspects that make up playing blues guitar.

### Is there a big blues scene in Ireland?

Not really in the south where I live, we are about an hour from Dublin. There are some great annual festivals in the north, and there are some blues clubs around here, but it's not as big a scene as it is elsewhere in Europe.

### Where is your main fanbase?

That's definitely in mainland Europe. We play a lot in Germany, Belgium, France and Scandinavia, and we have toured Canada and Australia as well. Europe has a lot of bigger blues clubs where a band like ours can pull a decent audience. The Netherlands blues scene is excellent, they have a really good co-operative system there. A number of clubs will pool resources and that means that they can pay for a band like ours to fly over and play some dates, and the clubs share the costs between them.

That means that one club doesn't have to cover the whole expense of flights and hotels, which would be uneconomical, but they share that cost, and because they are sufficiently distanced from each other, we can pull a good crowd at each club, and everyone wins. I think it's a wonderful system, I'm not sure why other countries haven't tried the same idea, maybe they will eventually.

### I watched you playing an incendiary version of Voodoo Woman at the Rory Gallagher Festival in 2019, you must really be missing playing live.

We all are, I think any musician who plays live is feeling the effects of the lockdown, we certainly are. It has worked out well in some ways, I was pregnant through most of the first lockdown, and we have had our daughter during the second phase, and we have been able to spend time at home with the children and get the album finished, so that has been a major plus for us. But now the album is finished, we are really keen to go out and tour and play our songs live again. My home is on the road, I adore it, so hopefully it won't be long before we can come over and play some shows there in England.

### Any gig plans in place yet?

Not yet, like everyone else we are taking it a day at a time. We have a couple of tentative dates booked in here in Ireland, and we were in discussions for a couple of European festival shows, but they have come back and said they are doing scaled down events this time with local bands, and they will have the international bands back next year. We will be ready to go as soon as we can though, we can't wait.

### When you write your songs, do you come up with the music or the lyrics first?

That's a good question, and the simple answer is, it is always evolving for me. When I first got into writing songs, I would always get hooks and riffs on the guitar and then find some words to go with them. Now, with the children,



PICTURE: Adam Kennedy





PICTURE: Adam Kennedy

and just being busier at home, I rely on my phone, I will record a line if I think of one, or hum a riff, knowing that I can go back to it later and maybe work it up into something. My husband is always finding ideas on his guitar and he will play them to me and we can work things out from there.

Thank heavens for technology! I remember reading that Bill Withers came up with the melody line for Lovey Day when he was at

## *“I think of it as suffering for my art”*

work, he worked as an aircraft mechanic. So, he had to hum the song to himself all day so he could remember it until he got home and got it down, and that's how we got that wonderful song. I can't imagine how Elton John and Bernie Taupin worked together in separate rooms never meeting up to talk about their ideas. It's just whatever works for the individual, you find your own way that works for you, and everyone is different.

### **Do you record as a full band in the studio?**

What we tend to do is go in with the songs roughed out and see what the band make of them. I always think it's best to get something down in the first two or three takes, that's when it's fresh and musicians work better when they are coming fresh to something. After that, the edge goes, so we usually have something to fall back on. Again, it's how it works for individual bands. The Stones will spend hours and hours, days even, just noodling around in the studio and recording everything and then listening back to see what

works. That's fine if you have their recording budget! But that said, they have done their time when they have had to get things down to a time scale and work under pressure. Everyone finds their own best way of working.

### **Have you got a favourite song on the new album?**

I am fond of Mercy, and also Voodoo Blues, they are my favourites right now, but I am really keen to find out what our audience likes because quite often a favourite song can change because the audience may really like a different one, and that will become a favourite because everyone likes to play the songs that their fans like the best.

### **You play a Gold Top Les Paul – do you find it heavy?**

Les Pauls are heavy guitars, I never really thought about it, but when you go through airports and you hand your guitar case over while you go through the scanner, the person holding it often comments on the weight of it. I do know after a gig that I been carrying it, because when the adrenalin wears off, I can always feel the strain in my shoulders. When I get a massage, the masseur will always tell me that I have a knot in my shoulder that needs to be worked out, and I know that is the direct result of playing my Gibson night after night. But hey, iconic guitars are worth a little pain here and there, I think of it as suffering for my art! I have no problem with that at all!



[www.graineduffy.com](http://www.graineduffy.com)

## DISCOGRAPHY

- |                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| • Voodoo Blues       | 2020 |
| • Where I Belong     | 2017 |
| • Grainne Duffy Live | 2015 |
| • Test of Time       | 2011 |
| • Out of the Dark    | 2007 |





**LISA MANN**

**PART 2**



WORDS: Yvette Jenkins PICTURES: Erik Kabik, Lisa Mann

**West Virginia born singer, songwriter and bass player Lisa Mann, now working out of blues capital Portland, Oregon, boasts an impressive career spanning three decades.**

She is recognised by her superb powerhouse voice, word wizardry and outstanding bass playing. I was delighted to chat with Lisa again and find out a little more about what makes her tick and get the lowdown on her latest release and plans going forward in 2021.

In part 1 – issue 118, Lisa talked about her early love of music, how she got into



playing bass, the musicians she admired and her journey through the rock and metal genres to the blues. Lisa spoke candidly about what she's been up to in the last year and about the impact of the pandemic within the Portland, Oregon music scene and much more.

This time I asked Lisa about life on the road touring, her latest release 'Old Girl', how she is reaching out to her fans in the absence of live gigs, and what's in the pipeline going forward... It went something like this.

**Lisa are you missing your road band and being out on tour? How did you get on touring England and would you like to hit the road in England again?**

I sure do miss being on tour! I had three tours of the US get cancelled, it was very disappointing. In the western states of America, you have to drive very long distances. I have a Toyota van that has comfortable seating, but you can still get stiff and sore. But I love trundling across the country with my bandmates Jason Thomas and Dave Melyan, they are both very humorous and we pass the time by cracking jokes the whole way. They're both easy going and helpful. As for touring England that was all Dudley's doing. The tours I've done have been incredible and I sure hope to return! It was amazing to play the Great British Rhythm and Blues Fest, as well as at the Half Moon in Putney and everywhere else.

**How did you hook up with Dudley Ross?**

How Dudley and I met is an unbelievable story! My band was on tour, and we played a very large festival in Las Vegas. On the last day, we were packing the van in the valet parking area of the hotel, and we were in a hurry. But as we were loading the gear, I remembered that I had promised my stepfather that I would bet \$20 for him on a single roll (high-low) on the craps table. I knew there was a craps table just inside, so I told my band "I'll be right back, I'm going to make that bet for my dad," assuming that I would lose. But when the dice was rolled, it hit! I won over \$300! So, instead of going back the way I came to go back to the van, I had to go further inside the casino to cash in my chips. On the way to the cashier, a fellow

with a British accent approached me with a recording device and a microphone. "Lisa Mann! I'm hoping you'll do an interview for me, I've been trying to track you down!" Even though I was in a hurry, I said yes and we did a brief interview. I told him my band was out in the valet lot, and he went out to speak with them while I claimed my earnings. When I came back, he told me "I know a fellow who brings American blues artists to the UK - he'll love you!" Now, I hear promises all the time that never come true, but some time later I got an email from Dudley Ross! And he WAS interested, and he did book a tour and brought me over. I had so much fun, and he brought me back a couple of times. Unfortunately, the last time I was there, I had a broken foot and was hobbling around on a cane. I was probably grumpy and difficult! But I do hope he'll be game to do another tour. He is an incredible musician!

**So, about your new EP. What was the inspiration for this new release? You've included a great cover of a Sister Rosetta Tharpe song. Is she a particular inspiration for you and your work.**

The main inspiration for releasing the Old Girl EP was the fact that I hadn't released anything in a few years. I spent a couple of years writing and recording the heavy metal project, White Crone - The Poisoner, which included teaching myself how to play guitar on it. It was quite time consuming! So I didn't have a full album of new songs written, but there were the four new songs that the band and I had been playing in our set. I decided we should record those songs, as well as a cover. Now, my friend Sonny Hess put together a women's showcase for a Rosetta Tharpe tribute show, and she asked me to learn That's All for the show. I changed it a

bit, making it in a minor key, as well as adding a verse of my own. I didn't know much about Sister Rosetta Tharpe until after she was nominated for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Then her music had a big resurgence in the United States. She is the ultimate role model! Playing that big Les Paul in high heels and a dress? Rocking

those guitar licks long before Chuck Berry ever did. She is an inspiration to all women in music. Oddly enough, it was at that tribute show that I got the idea to write the song "It's the Monkeys or Me." That song is a true story about my singer friend Joanne Broh and

how she met her sweetheart Robert. He really did have a travelling monkey show!

**The Monkeys video makes me smile, and I'm guessing it was a lot of fun in the making. What was the thinking behind it and will you tell us a little about the production... how much of a hoot was it? I hear you're really fond of monkeys.**

That video was so much fun to make! I had purchased a bunch of stuffed monkeys, including the giant one you see Dave the drummer flopping around with. And Jason brought a bunch of his daughter's toy monkeys over as well. The videographer and director is Cypress Jones, he also did my White Crone - The Poisoner video. He filmed us making the monkeys dance and play, and we all laughed the entire time! It was a very hot day but we didn't care. And yes I am very fond of monkeys and apes. As a girl, I read Jane Goodall's book, In the Shadow of Man. She is a personal hero of mine, and she has helped many monkeys and apes who were used in experiments and circuses to find homes in sanctuaries. And that's what happens to the monkeys in the song.

**Some tracks have a country feel, is this just**

**"I never try to capture any kind of market. I really just follow what the songs want to be"**





**you and your love and mastery of different genres or a deliberate move to capture a slice of the country market.**

I never try to capture any kind of market, although it might serve me well to do so. I really just follow what the songs want to be. Remember how I told you I listened to the radio as a kid? In the US, Time-Life Magazine put out an album series of popular radio hits, mostly soft rock and dance music. It was called "AM Gold" and some people use that term to refer to soft rock. A lot of it had country influences, like John Denver and Anne Murray. I think the sound for the song "Old Girl" was inspired by those tender years spent listening to the AM radio late at night. Being from West Virginia, country music was everywhere, so that seeped into my bones as well. Plus, guitarist Jason Thomas is a master at country guitar. He is also in a band called the Sons of Bitches! I really wanted to capture his strengths as a guitarist.

**Would the EP have been a full album under normal circumstances. Is it difficult to finance the mix and recording and get a physical copy of your music out for sale?**

If I had enough songs to make a full album, I probably would have gone ahead with it. But it is far more expensive as an independent artist to record, pay musicians, etc. I have been steadfast in keeping up good credit all my life, and have financed albums on credit cards, then paid them down once they are being sold. But it's probably a lucky thing I didn't have a full album this time, because it is very hard to sell a lot of albums if you can't tour!

**How important do you feel it is to offer a physical option e.g. CD or vinyl as opposed to digital formats only.**



It is very important to have a physical product, especially if you are playing festivals and on tour. People coming to festivals want to bring something tangible home with them, I know I do. And they appreciate it when you autograph it as well. I myself prefer CD for the audio quality, however I know LPs are very popular again.

Maybe next time I will put an album on vinyl.

**In the absence of gigs, how are you reaching out to your fans, aside from the release of your new EP?**

I've had a few outdoor, covid-safe shows here in Portland to connect with my local audience, but those are few and far between. Mostly I have been live streaming from home. Mostly solo, but sometimes with my guitarist Jason and sometimes with Jason as well as Dave or my local drummer, Michael Ballash. We spread out distance wise, mask up, and open the windows for air flow. Also, I just hang out on social media and say hello to everybody, or join in with them on the gripes of the day.

**Not the same as a live gig but do you enjoy the social media streaming and the Facebook interaction with your followers?**

I do enjoy live streaming, especially when I can set up my phone and see who is tuning in. My husband Allen learned OBS streaming platform, which can capture video as well as stream live with graphics, multi-cameras and more. Lately he has set up his own camera, he calls the "Mr Mann Cam" and we clown around. People get a kick out of it! But no, it's not the same as playing in front of a crowd, and I know it's not the same for them either.

**Will you continue with the live streaming when we return to some social and industry**

normality? It's a great way for us fans to get involved and feel 'connected'.

I believe I will continue live streaming from home on Facebook or other platforms. Probably not weekly, but at least once a month. And I'll be able to include a bandmate or two! We are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

**What's on the Horizon for you, do you have anything in the pipeline you can share with us?**

It's been extremely hard to make plans during this pandemic, but there are a few festivals that cancelled in 2020 that rescheduled us for 2021. We hope those gigs stand! Also, on the heavy metal front, I am singing lead with a band called Splintered Throne. We have been writing songs during lockdown and sharing files. We almost have a full album written and I think it's going to be fantastic! I've got some ideas for another blues release brewing, but I probably won't get back to the studio until the virus lets up.

So here's hoping for a brighter future!!



[www.lisamannmusic.com](http://www.lisamannmusic.com)

- Lisa Mann endorses Bartolini pickups
- Plays a Tobias Killer B 6 string bass
- Uses a Warwick LWA 1000 Bass Head
- D'Addario strings
- Shure microphone

## DISCOGRAPHY

- |                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| • Old Girl                  | 2020 |
| • Hard Times, Bad Decisions | 2016 |
| • Move On                   | 2014 |
| • Satisfied                 | 2012 |



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# ALASTAIR GREENE



PIC: Amanda Peacock



Alastair Greene has just released his latest album *The New World Blues*, recorded with Tab Benoit for his Whiskey Bayou Records label. Alastair has been recording since 2002, developing his blues/rock style to what we see today. His grandfather, Chico Alvarez was a trumpet player with Stan Kenton's band back in the day. So we chatted about the new album and his musical past, and all things in general, to where he is right now.

**WORDS:** Stephen Harrison **PICTURES:** BratGirlmedia

### Was your grandfather a major influence on your musical career as a blues guitarist?

Yeah, Chico Alvarez, my dad's dad kept his mum's name, Greene, which is rather rare, so technically I'm an Alvarez. It was very inspiring to me as a kid before I committed to playing music, that my grandfather was a heavy cat back in the day. I've still got records where he is a major soloist on the albums. So, that was cool. The last time that I saw him, he was playing a show in Las Vegas where he lived for the last part of his life. It's something that I keep with me as an inspiration to keep playing music. To dedicate my life to an art form and see where it leads ya.

### So was he the biggest influence on you?

I would say just as far as trying to make a name for myself as a musician. It's inspiring to have as part of my lineage even though I'm not a jazz musician or a trumpet player. I feel that there is a part of me that is carrying on a family tradition.

### What were you listening to as you were growing up in Santa Barbara?

My dad was into classical music, but my mum's record collection was what I started listening to. The first music that I heard was Stevie Wonder, along with The Beatles, and Leon Russell, and Elton John. My mum had some cool records that I have with me here. So that was like the first music I remember hearing. Then when I got into my own music from listening to the radio it was probably the early eighties and was called the new wave of British Heavy Metal. The first things that I remember hearing were, Def Leppard, Iron Maiden. Then I got

into the American bands such as Van Halen, and living so close to Los Angeles there was so much going on around the Sunset Strip at that time. Guns And Roses came out, and there were always great guitarists in each band. Some of the music doesn't hold up anymore but the guitarist still does. It wasn't until later on when I was in high school that I got turned onto blues and blues/rock. A lot of the music that I love, like heavy metal and blues/rock all come from the UK.

### You have collaborated with a lot of artists in the past. Is that something you love doing, or is it something that happened by chance?

As far as I like collaborating with people on music, I've been doing a lot of that recently because everyone is home right now because of the situation. So I can record here inside my own studio. As you can see it's full of guitars and stuff. I love collaborating with other artists as far as creating or playing a solo on someone else's record or writing a song with someone. I do enjoy collaborating. As far as being a sideman, the opportunity that has come along to me, playing with Alan Parsons for seven years, I've toured with Starship and I did the tour with Sugar Ray Rayford in Europe and the UK. Those things just come along and it's a yes or no moment. At the end of the day, I write and sing songs and play guitar. That's what I want to be known for, ultimately.

### Are you at a stage of your life where you expected to be at this moment in time?

Yes and no. There is part of me that can look back and see how fortunate I've been with some of these opportunities that I've had.

And the sixteen-year-old me that was in my parents' house playing guitar and learning songs, and someone says to me that you will be touring the world with your guitar if you practice hard enough, that part of me is very satisfied. The other part of me that is motivated to continue making music, you are never quite satisfied. So it's kind of a yes and kind of a no. A little bit of both.

**You are enjoying where you are right now?**

Yeah. I'm like every other artist, everyone's career has frozen in time from a year ago. I've been doing what I can and I think the best route for me is as far as continuing to make and release music. I think it's important to keep doing that and keep creating.

**You touched on what you listened to earlier in the chat, but who were your musical heroes growing up? Was it Guns And Roses or did**

**you have British Blues Boom people that had a heavy influence on you?**

I started playing guitar when I was a freshman in high school and I played piano, saxophone, and bass before that. My heroes around that time were Eddie Van Halen and a guy named Jake E. Lea who played with Ozzy in his band. But then I got into blues and blues/rock a buddy of my dad's lent me some records. B.B. King Live At The Regal and Buddy Guy, Man Of The Blues, and Stevie Ray Vaughan's first three records. Johnny Winter and all those guys. That's where it all clicked for me. I could hear where the hard rock guy's got their stuff from. Then I got into Eric Clapton in a big way, Jeff Beck and Led Zeppelin. I was always into Jimmy Page and his songwriting. And when you get into those things you trace Eric Clapton back into Cream and then back into John Mayall. I got seriously into John Mayall. Aynsley Dunbar moved to Santa Barbara and I played with him



for about a year before he moved to Las Vegas. Playing with him we did some John Mayall stuff and some Frank Zappa stuff as well. The album that he was on with John Mayall, *It's A Hard Road*, also had Peter Green on it. It was at that time that I started to get into Peter Green in a big way. Before that, Peter Green was kind of an underground figure for me. There is so much music to devour once you get into blues and blues/rock

### **What convinced you to sign for Tab Benoit's Whiskey Bayou Record label?**

I've met Tab at The Blues Bender in Las Vegas about 5-6 years ago. And when I met Tab I was still playing with Alan Parsons. When you are a blues/rock player, playing with Alan Parsons doesn't necessarily cross over into people's conscience in that world. For me, that can be a blessing and a curse in equal measure. If you are in the blues world you may not know who that is or even like that kind of music. I consider myself a musician and guitarist first and foremost. So, I met Tab at The Blues Bender and it turned out that he liked Alan Parsons. He loved the history of Alan Parsons being the producer on *Dark Side Of The Moon*. We hit it off Tab and me. He's a funny guy and when I'm relaxed with people I become a funny guy also. In 2018 I put out two records in quick succession. At that point, I was a little discouraged with the business end of things. I'd left Alan Parsons and put everything into my solo career. Then I heard that SugarRay Rayford needed a guitarist, I realized that I needed to work, so I auditioned and got that gig. As soon as I got that Gig, I found myself back at The Blues Bender and Tab came up to me and said, hey man I've got a record label, do you want to make a record? I also knew that he takes his artists out on tour. I wrote some songs on a break from the tour with SugarRay and went down and recorded with Tab. He's a great guy to work with, a great producer.

**This is the first album that you have recorded without your traditional band.**



*Alastair Greene and Kim Simmonds*



*Alan Parsons and Alastair Greene*



*Starship's Mickey Thomas and Alastair Greene*



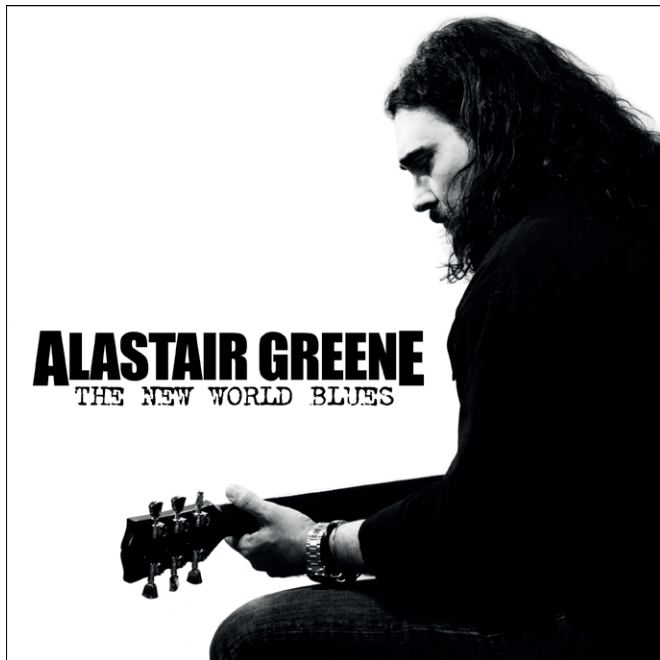
Yeah, I kind of set myself up to succeed so when I knew that I was going to do this I wrote the majority of the music before I went down to the studio. Knowing that Tab was going to play drums and Corey was going to be playing bass, I wanted to make it more in the blues realm song-writing-wise. I also wanted them to have their interpretations of the songs so it was pretty easy. I also like to challenge myself because I think that is how you grow as a musician. As you saw today, we dropped an acoustic single off the album ( Bayou Mile). I can't think of anything more terrifying than an electric guitar player, or a blues/rock guitar player than to put out an acoustic single. That's madness to me, but I want to push myself to do things that are outside of my comfort zone so that I can continue to grow.

**Is there anyone that you have not played with that you would like to?**

I've been very fortunate to have played with a lot of people because I've been doing this for a while such as Walter Trout and Debbie Davies. There are a lot of guys that I respect. I'd love to sit in with Warren Haynes and Blackberry Smoke who I think are a great band. I know Joe Bonamassa quite well and he's been so good to me. There are always going to be people that I would love to play with throughout my career.

**When things return to normal, do you have plans to tour Europe and the UK?**

That has been one of my goals for a long time because that's where a lot of the fans are. I don't have plans right now. One of the things I need in place is a festival of some kind to be open to us playing. It's becoming harder and harder for American artists to tour Europe right now because so many have already estab-



lished themselves and also there are so many great bands and artists already over there.

**Well, thank you so much for your time buddy. It's been great chatting with you.**

It was my pleasure. Thanks for setting this up. I'm a big fan of your publication. Can't thank you enough. Speak soon, Stephen. Bye.



**DISCOGRAPHY**

- |                                |      |
|--------------------------------|------|
| • The New World Blues          | 2020 |
| • Live From The 805            | 2018 |
| • Dream Train                  | 2017 |
| • Now And Again                | 2016 |
| • Trouble At Your Door         | 2014 |
| • Through The Rain             | 2011 |
| • Walking In Circles           | 2009 |
| • Official Bootleg- Live In LA | 2003 |
| • A Little Wiser               | 2002 |

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A woman with dark hair, wearing a grey flat cap, a white long-sleeved button-down shirt, a black vest, black leggings, and brown leather boots, is leaning against a large, gnarled tree trunk. She is holding a black electric guitar with a maple neck. The background is a lush green park with many trees and grass. The lighting is bright, suggesting daytime.

# LIZ BARAK



**There have been many interesting creative ventures to come out of the lockdown over the last twelve months but one which grabbed our attention is the Liz Barak Project**

**WORDS & PICTURES:** Adam Kennedy

A versatile and innovative artist, Barak is a music producer, audio engineer, guitarist and author. In recent times Liz has set forth with a large and ambitious music project that has been founded upon musical collaborations between female artists across the planet.

The debut cover from the project is a rendition of Eric Clapton's "Layla" featuring prominent female guitarists from the blues/rock world such as Erja Lytinen, Eliana Cargnelutti, Nili Brosh, and Helen Ibe.

Liz Barak Project's debut album, "Ballad to the North Wind", features seven covers and one original. All were arranged, produced and mixed by Liz herself. However, this is not just any cover record, each of the tracks on the album are also mentioned in Barak's book of the same name about a singer-songwriter in London during the 90s.

Blues Matters Magazine recently caught up with Liz Barak at home in the Galilea to get the low down on her inspirational, somewhat global music project. Social media catalyzed the initial vision for the musical side of the Liz Barak Project

"It started with the idea of creating a cover project. I kind of just put an ad on my Facebook wall and I said, okay, I have a lot of brilliant music friends in and around the world. I've been around for a while, who wants to collaborate? I'm living in the middle of nowhere in the Galilea. I have no access to people. Does anybody want to collaborate on a music project? I'm recording a cover album. And a lot of people replied. It was brilliant. And a lot of people I haven't heard

too from for a while. I was like, oh, hello, good morning, look who woke up, and he's doing music again. So, it started from that. And I started collecting people and collecting ideas about what I'm doing, but it wasn't really happening."

**It was decided that a cover of "Layla" would be the musical starting point, but Barak wasn't prepared to accept anything but perfection:**

"I needed something very big for "Layla" because I told you, "Layla" is kind of the theme of my book. I need it to be a big deal. I realized very quickly that writing a book which may succeed or not may be okay or not - I think it's amazing, but it's not the point. Creating a music project that is just ok, it is not me. I've been in the music industry for a very long time, I'm a perfectionist it needs to be amazing. I'm horribly judgmental of people who do mediocre things in music. This was the primary thing that happened there at that point. It was like, you've got great musicians, but what's so interesting about a cover album, it's stupid. You know, it's going to be mediocre and I'm going to be judgmental on myself here. So, I stopped. I already had people I was sending parts too and stuff. I was like, no, no, no, no. I called everybody up. I was like, no, we're not doing anything. I need to calculate my path here.

I was driving to my work one morning and I was teaching in a local college around here. I was listening to Derek and the Dominos "Layla". I was listening to it on repeat because I needed an idea of what to do with it. It's perfect as it is. I have an amazing producer friend, I met him when I lived in London, he told me something - if it isn't broken, don't fix it. You don't need to

touch something beautiful. If something's good, don't touch it. It's perfect. Why touch it? You know, why, why it's beautiful."

**Barak envisioned the idea of having "Layla" performed by female virtuous guitarists:**

"It suddenly hit me. You don't need to touch it. You need to keep it as it is because it's great. What you need to do is you need to find amazing women that will play it. Because that moment I started thinking that we were ten women in our department. We were ten women and a thousand men. This is a crazy thing I'm telling you - we were ten women and a thousand men in a guitar department. So obviously the issue here and generally finding women in music, you would just find vocalists and pianists. That's what you find - that and violinists. But you know, that's what you find. Women are not in every industry in the music industry, and I've come across that many times in my audio engineering career because I'm always the only woman there. I've seen judgment, I've seen jokes. You always get a lot of stuff about whether, if it's bad or good at some other point, but you're always the only woman there, which is the thing, you know?

So, I was like, okay, maybe I'm going to go there to that point - as I'm bothered by it. I'm just going to find women playing guitar. But you know, at that point I was like, okay, I know Nili (Brosh). I hadn't talked to her since Berklee, which was, I don't know, 15 years ago. But we graduated together, we knew each other. We were an acquaintance, but you know, we're not even friends. We're Facebook friends. We don't really know each other. I was like, oh, she's the only person I know - but she's really famous now, the odds of her saying yes are very slim because we're not exactly friends, we just know each other. But you know, I don't really know that many women guitarists. So, I was not full of excitement about the idea. I was like, you're jumping way over your head now, so you should probably take a month. Go for it, but take a

month, very low expectations and start sending emails. Probably, nobody's going to answer, but I'm going to start sending them. And if I'm going to have five women answering me, I'm going to say, yes, we're going to go for it.

So, I just used every break. Every time I had. I started sitting in the nighttime, I Googled women, the most amazing women playing lead guitar. I know a lot of men playing guitar. I don't even know that many women. So, I just started looking at Google. I found a lot of amazing women. And I just started writing to them on Facebook. I found them on Facebook. I started writing to them. I hadn't had any idea of how to find them. I found some emails of managers, to which nobody replied. I just started sending weird emails.

Italian blues/rock guitarist Eliana Cargnelutti was one of the first artists to reply. But how would Liz seal the deal?: "She asked a very interesting question - who else is participating? What's going on here? She wasn't really saying she wanted money. But she was like, what's it for? What does it represent? And I was like, oh, correct. She has a point. Why would people just want to participate? Because I wrote a book. It's not good enough. Okay. Recalculate plan. So, I realized that just saying to people, I wrote a book, I want to promote it. Would you please do it for free? Like I wouldn't join in. If somebody would write to me with something like that, I would probably say no. So, I realized at that point that it needs to be a separate project. It needs to be a music project and a book. And obviously, they're correlating, but there has to be complete separation between the two. They have to stand independently. And I think that was the wisest thing I've done - that moment. I said, okay, so the music project is going to promote women. I want to do it because I think it's a crazy idea and I really want to do it. I'm not trying to make any money off of it. So, if it's going to generate any money, I'm going to donate it to global warming. That's the most important thing to me as far as what happens in the world. So, I'm going to tell everybody, listen, I'm not

doing it for money, any money coming in, I'm donating it to something. And the whole idea here is to promote women. And I think realizing that I'm going to put it in a separate box, again they're correlating because it's the same songs mentioned in the book, but it's this one that stands alone. This one stands alone, and they will be talking to each other.

And I think the second I decided that it was easier for me to communicate with women because I think that that's something when you come to somebody and say, okay, I have a project that wants to promote women and I don't have any intention making money, but I'm doing it for the love of music. So, the second people read that they said, okay, I want to take part in this. This sounds cool. I would want to participate in something like that. So, I would always think if that's something that I would want or not. So, I think that was the first step. That was the smart step I've done to separate them into two separate things.

**Barak knew that the involvement of US-based guitar virtuoso Nili Brosh would set the ball rolling. But how would she get Brosh involved with her project?**

I knew I needed a big name, which at that point I knew I'm never going to get anybody big. Like someone like Eliana, I knew I'm never going to get her if I'm not going to give her a name, which at that point I knew there was no other way, but to send an email to Nili Brosh. I sent a begging email. I begged really - she could hear that I was begging. She sent a very laughing email in reply. She could hear I was really begging. And she said, listen, I'm very busy. I just released an album. I can't do it. It sounds like a brilliant idea, like really well done for the idea, but I can't do it. It's a really hectic time for me. I can't do it, but best of luck. If you need any recommendations, I can give you a telephone number of a friend. And, again, I just didn't take no. I knew that if I would have her, I would have all the rest. So, at that point, I just started nagging. I was like,





it's just eight measures of a solo, a solo of you – amazing, and it's just eight measures – I have to have you, please. I called, I begged. And I think I just made her laugh so much. She said you know what, fine I'm going to play those eight measures for you. Let's get it over with. Nili just did it because I really harassed her."

Once Nili Brosh signed up, the flood gates opened and many more signed up to be part of the project: "But that's it. I told Eliana, Nili was in. She was like, oh my God, I'm definitely in. And, then again, Eva, I contacted her. I told her that Nili and Eliana were involved, and she was like, oh, I love them. Yes, definitely. So, it was just rolling. Helen heard about Nili. Again, I just said the name, Nili Brosh. Everybody knows who she is. I told that to Helen, and the second I said that name and she was like, oh, she's amazing. And to me, it was really funny, because, I didn't have any proper music video out and my latest album was over 10 years ago. So yeah. Who the hell are you? And I couldn't believe it, that all those amazing musicians were like, yeah, that's a cool thing. And Nili's in and I'm in. They had nothing to base their 'yes' on, which I thought was just amazing."

**But with "Layla" now in the bag – where does the Liz Barak Project go from here?**

"Well, I can't stop because I've started something very cool. So, I can't really stop it. So, there are just two aspects of things I'm doing right now, which still is too much for one person to be doing. And very ambitious plans on both ends of what I'm trying to do.

I'm working on a bass production right now, of "Come Together", which is going to be that. So that's going to be the next one. It's going to be like "Layla", but a bass thing. After that, it's going to be female horn players. So, there are a few things ahead, I'm coming up with a few ideas. There's going to be one with female DJs, remixing stuff together.

I want to take women that are in places that are not popular. Like taking singers is nice, but this

is a realm of women. I want to take something that is less realm of women to do stuff. So, I want to do different kinds of things that use women in specific areas in the industry, where there are less women in - put it like that. One thing I'm very much afraid of doing is percussion stuff because finding women percussionists and drummers is very difficult. So, this is the only one I'm still not sure I'm going to be taking. I want to do it, but I'm pretty sure I won't. This is one aspect, and the other aspect is - so this is at the moment, it's a nonprofit thing. I'm doing it on my own. I can't pay people.

And even if I do, I pay them stupid fees just for the sake of paying something because it's polite - but it's not real fees that people should be paid. So, I'm trying to get this thing to become an organization and to get people to donate money to this. Not because I want to make any money, I still don't want to make any money out of it, but I want to be able to pay people properly, which I feel very bad that I can't at the moment.

There's a whole aspect of getting this to become a music organization and to get people to invest in it and to put funds in it - for different reasons they want to do it. Primarily, so I can properly pay every participant. I think this is the only thing that really bothers me here. And this is why I'm working on a business level here. We're creating something now which takes a lot of my time by the way. But it's very crucial for me to be able to get it into something that will be able to pay all the participants.

The book "Ballad to the North Wind" is out now via Amazon, with the accompanying album available via both iTunes and Spotify.

For further details please visit:

**[www.lizbaraksproject.com](http://www.lizbaraksproject.com)**



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**REGINA  
BONELLI**



Regina Bonelli is a blues/soul/gospel singer hailing from Brooklyn, New York. She's a major artist and contributor to True Groove recording label alongside Tomas Doncker, Marla Mase, and many more. Her last album, *Love Letter*, was hardly off the blues charts. She's currently recording a new album. We recently chatted on a quiet Sunday afternoon about the new album, True Groove, and many more things besides.

WORDS: Stephen Harrison PICTURES: Supplied

### So how have you been spending your time during lockdown?

As far as music goes I've been writing new songs for my record that is coming out in the spring. That's been cool. And I've been recording for the label with Tomas which has been wonderful. We are in our little bubble in the studio. That's my favourite place to be. I love performing on stage but the studio is so cool. I love recording in the studio. I've been playing a bit of guitar and keyboards.

### The new record, is that a solo thing or is it with the True Groove guys?

Tomas and James are producing but they are both on the album also. They both play guitar on the album and also write songs on the album. So, all the usual people that are associated with True Groove are on the album. We have a lot of fun in the studio, the three of us. But it's also serious because we are putting out a record that we want to be very proud of.

### What's the first blues record that you ever heard?

Wow, my mum had a Leadbelly record in her collection and my two older sisters had a great record collection and I was exposed to a lot of Motown stuff when I was young. The Beatles featured in our record collection too. We had every Beatles record. As far as my own thing with the blues, I was really into Big Mama Thornton and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. I was lucky enough to see them perform. Back then a gig bill would be something like The Electric Light Orchestra, Joe Cocker, and Albert King and you almost didn't realize

that you were seeing a true blues legend, never realizing that you were getting educated. It's like the Rolling Stones with Muddy Waters, that whole African/American thing coming together from day one. All music comes from that. Everything. It's so strange to me that we can still come across people who are so racist, but they say they love the blues. I mean, how is that even possible? So, I was lucky enough to be exposed to all this great music at such a young age. My father could play guitar and piano so there was a lot of music going on in our house all the time. I'd listen to Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell and Leadbelly. We listened to classical music as well. So loads of different stuff going on. I've been writing songs since I was like 15 or 16 so I have a lot of influences on my music, not just blues.

### How did you become involved with Tomas and True Groove?

I got involved with some guys that knew Tomas, actually I went to see a bass player that I knew and he turned out to be Tomas's bass player. I went to see them play in New Jersey at an outdoor gig. I watched the band play and I was blown away, you know. I thought it was so cool. Marla was there doing her thing and it was awesome. I decided that I was going to record, I'd done a record before. My friend suggested that I should meet Tomas. I then played a couple of gigs with them, doing some blues, Koko Taylor stuff, and a few other things. We started talking and it was like, let's do a record together, so we started recording.

### I get the feeling that it's like a small family?

Yeah, it is. It's so much like that. It's like all for one and one for all. The musicians are all so talented and are nice people. It's a beautiful vibe. On my last record, I had Aretha Franklin's keyboard player on the album. How cool is that?

**What was the Brooklyn music scene like when you were growing up?**

Yeah, right now Brooklyn is so cool, but back then Brooklyn was very provincial. Back then, if you were from Brooklyn you wanted to be in Manhattan. That was a cool place to be. You had the Village, Greenwich Village which was so vibrant. Every storefront was a club or a restaurant. But even before the pandemic, the New York scene has been deteriorating, sadly. There used to be some cool blues clubs back in the day. We used to have The Lone Star Café which was a cool place, we had Annies Car Wash which was awesome.



**When we visited New York many years ago we went to B B Kings Club.**

Oh wow. I played there a few years ago. Unfortunately, it's closed now. It closed before the pandemic. I played at B B Kings club, I played at The City Winery and The Cutting Room. There were a lot of things going on around that time. Hopefully, when things open up again, we'll be able to get all the things we want from live music again. If you can make it here you can make it anywhere (laughs).

**Yeah, I seem to remember some guy singing about that( laughs). Who has had the biggest influence on your career so far?**

You mean like musicians? Well, blues wise, singing wise, there are so many great singers.

I was very influenced by Aretha Franklin, Big Mama Thornton, Joni Mitchell, and Curtis Mayfield, Al Green, Marvin Gaye. Just so many awesome singers that had a huge influence on me. And, of course, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. I could sing you every Beatles track they ever made. I feel that is the way that

I write songs, because of so many different people that had an impact on my life. So I can express it in my way.

**You've just mentioned The Rolling Stones. What prompted you to record Paint It Black on your last record, Love Letter?**

I'll tell you honestly. You can ask Tomas about this, when I hear something and it pops into my head, I think, wow that would be a great song to do. I say to Tomas, do you know what we should do? And he's like, oh God here it comes. That's something that I do constantly. One day I was sitting here and that song came on, and I was like, wow,

that would be such a great song to do. I also love Ruby Tuesday. We'd written a bunch of songs for the album, and we were looking for a few more. That song popped into my head and I thought that would be so cool to put on the album. It's not normally a song that people cover, like Brown Sugar or Satisfaction.

**If you could play any venue in the world, where would you choose?**

Oh, the Garden. (Madison Square Garden). What I'd love to do is Glastonbury or Wembley Stadium. Whenever I watch videos of these places they look so cool with the audience out front. As a musician, I look at these kinds of places and think, that is so unbelievable to be able to play gigs like that. But also I'd like to play places like The Beacon Theatre which

we have close by over here. Smaller, more intimate gigs like that. Radio City Music Hall would also be such a cool place to play. Over in England, you have The Royal Albert Hall, so put me down for that. I'll choose The Royal Albert Hall.

### Explain the story about your song, Mr. Big Man.

Well, I wrote it before the ex-president was in office. It was kind of like, did he really say that? Did he really do that? Did that just happen and nobody said anything? But it's really about the thoughts I'd had a few years before that all happened, a lot of people thought the same way. Thinking about the one percent of these powerful people that run the world for greed, power, or what have you. It's kind of like someone standing on top of everyone else for the use of power and greed. I was thinking that you can't keep pushing people until they say, I can't take this anymore. I feel that if we all just got together then this stuff wouldn't happen. It's so complicated. I wrote the song because I feel that this is all so stupid and not doing any good for anyone. So, I hope that things get better. It was something that I had to write about in my own way.

Well, thank you so much for taking the time to speak to Blues

Matters Magazine on a Sunday afternoon. I've really enjoyed our chat. It's been an absolute pleasure talking to you.



[www.reginabonelli.com](http://www.reginabonelli.com)

## DISCOGRAPHY

- Love Letter- 2018
- Listen To My Brother- 2006

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# BRITAIN'S GODFATHER OF THE BLUES

# CHRIS BARBER

1930  
TO  
2021

One day in September 1958 students at the Newcastle College of Art assembled for their first class. One 17-year-old stood up, shouting "Who's going to the Chris Barber concert tonight?"

Another shouted "Yes, me!". These jazz fans were Eric Burdon, the other John Steel, drummer with The Animals. They went to the concert, enjoyed Chris Barber, and especially Barber's guest, Muddy Waters. Burdon decided that he'd become a blues singer.

In culture-starved post war Britain, jazz trombonist, bassist and band leader Chris brought us a galaxy of first-time experiences. Big Bill Broonzy, Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and other legends came to our shores due to his efforts.

Born on April 17th 1930 at Welwyn Garden City, he attended school in Royston, Hertfordshire. In the 1940s, Chris Barber would cycle 14 miles into Cambridge for violin lessons. His father gave him the bus fare, but Chris biked the 28-mile round trip to pocket the money to buy jazz and blues records. In those days, to pious bodies such as the BBC, jazz was close to being Satanic. Finding an imported jazz or blues record on so-called 'race' labels such as Bluebird or Blue Note was the equivalent of finding a gold nugget in your cornflakes.

When the war ended, he lived with his mother in Golders Green, with a treasured collection of over 70 precious jazz and blues 78s. In the summer of 1948, he took a job as a clerk in the Clerical and Medical Insurance Company. By October that year the hottest jazz you could hear was Humphrey Lyttelton's band at 100 Oxford Street, a Mecca for jazz fans, later famed as the 100 Club. One of Lyttelton's musicians, Harry Brown, asked



Pic: Heidi Widmer

the starry-eyed Barber if he'd like to buy a trombone. At £6.10s it was close to a week's wages, but Chris bought it, commenting later that it was a terrible instrument probably worth two quid. But that was the start of Chris Barber's career.

In 1949 Chris established a lifelong friendship with clarinet player Alex Revell, another regular at the 100 Club. Soon, Barber was sitting in with various bands; clarinetist Cy Laurie (who fired him after two weeks), The Original Dixielanders and the Crane River Jazz Band. Revell has an important niche in British pop history. He was on the tube going home and recognized the 17-year-old youth sitting opposite as another 100 Club regular. The conversation revealed that this young lad knew his way around the guitar. Revell invited the lad to his house. The guitarist was Tony Donegan, who eventually would purloin bluesman Lonnie Johnson's first name, and be crowned king of skiffle. That meeting resulted in Revell showing Donegan his banjo and writing down a few chords for him. Being avid devotees of the New Orleans music of King Oliver, Barber and Revell tried

their hand in all sorts of jazz outfits, deciding that the only way to play the music they loved was to form their own band. Revell's friend, Ben Cohen, Roy Sturgess and Brian Lawes were joined intermittently for gigs by banjo-playing National Serviceman Lonnie Donegan.

The byzantine history of British jazz band configurations would fill this whole magazine. The first gig the Chris Barber New Orleans Jazz Band played was on April 25th 1950 at the Empress Hall in Earl's Court. Eventually, they would become known as The Chris Barber Jazz and Blues Band. Since the first Chris Barber line-up, until the 21st century, there were over 40 line-ups.

What made Barber stand out from other dedicated New Orleans disciples, such as the brilliant but pedantic Ken Colyer, was his inclusive taste in roots music with the blues at its heart. His band had its own blues singer, Otilie Patterson. His banjo player Lonnie Donegan was brought out front with his guitar in the band's intervals, and with Chris on bass, skiffle was born. He employed the legendary Alexis Korner as guitarist whenever he could. When the Musicians Union's ban on American acts playing the UK faded, Chris was determined to bring as many blues legends over here as he could and feature them as guest acts on his tours. He was happy to sit in with many much younger British blues bands. Everyone in the great 1960s British blues boom knew him and owed him an immense debt. Jagger and Richards, Long John Baldry, Cyril Davies, Paul Jones and others all looked up to this genial jazz gentleman.

One summer night in the 1990s, I was fortunate to be MC at a concert by The Blues Band at Kew Gardens. As I loitered backstage, I got into an erudite conversation with an amiable old guy. We talked for over half an hour; blues, jazz, politics. He seemed familiar. Then a roadie handed me a written message: "Don't forget to announce our guest Chris Barber". It was a conversation I shall always treasure with a man whose efforts opened up a world we all enjoy today – the Blues.

**ROY BAINTON**

## ***Blues legend Paul Jones shares his personal thoughts on the passing of Chris Barber with Blues Matters:***

There's not much I could add to the list of reasons Chris Barber was so important to the history of Jazz & Blues in the United Kingdom. Apart from introducing Otilie Paterson, Lonnie Donegan and Alexis Korner to a waiting generation of future musicians, there's that remarkable list of star American guests he brought over to tour and record with his band, including Muddy Waters and Otis Spann, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Sonny Boy Williamson, Professor Alex Bradford and many more.

As he told me, he brought them at his own expense; the promoters wouldn't pay any extra for them, because the gigs were already sold out with just the band.

I'm not sure exactly when I first started to do some gigs with Chris, but I think it was in the early 1980s. I do recall later on doing a 10-date tour with the band in 1997, including a song I had written especially to do with them, entitled "You Can't Get Higher Than That". Trumpeter Pat Halcox (who was in the band for 54 years – which must tell us something about Chris as a bandleader) took a solo immediately after the vocal, so I took to ending it with 'you can't get higher than Pat'.

Chris used to 'sit in' with the Blues Band quite a lot. I remember thinking he must be a playaholic; he would come home from a long tour abroad somewhere, and get on the 'phone to us, asking if there were any gigs he could 'infest' – as he modestly put it. We roped him in to play on "Resting On Jesus", and he did the same to me on a version of "I'll Be Rested (When The Roll Is Called)". Twice he gave his time and great talents to my Charity fund-raising gigs at Cranleigh Arts Centre in Surrey. What a man!

What an icon! So sad that he has died – but I'm so grateful for his life.

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### ARIELLE

#### ANALOG GIRL IN A DIGITAL WORLD

##### INDEPENDENT

Listening to 'Analog Girl in a Digital World' by Arielle is like opening a time capsule to the 60s and 70s. A time when rock 'n' roll and blues music ruled the airwaves and your favourite artists released physical albums on vinyl LPs and 8 track tapes. At the top of the release, an intro featuring the evocative sounds of a dialup modem set the scene. Very quickly Arielle serves up her second serving of nostalgia with the astounding "Digital World". This being a song during which the US artist wistfully reminisces on the things she loves about times gone by when life was a lot slower and there was less reliance on our phones. Peace of Mind with its infectious melody is one of the stand-out tracks on the album. Whilst "This Is Our Intervention" feels as though it could fit on one of The Who's great concept albums such as Tommy or Quadrophenia. As the album progresses, Arielle delivers an up-tempo, bluesy rock n roll number titled Still A Man. With this track Arielle unleashes some fiery fretwork, with a scorching solo. I'd Rather Be In England is such a jolly, heart-felt, and affectionate number that brings a smile to your face. It's Arielle's way of paying homage to the UK. The Anglophile in the artist shines through in this number, as well as it being a real earworm. The track is exquisitely composed and arranged, and the addition of a few bars of ' God Save the Queen is a nice touch too. Acoustic ballads such as the breath taking Americana number Inside and Outside and the rather dreamy Living In A Fortress portray a gentler side of the artist's repertoire, whilst simultaneously showcasing Arielle's beautiful singing voice. Arielle's latest offering is like taking a Magical Mystery Tour through some of the glorious sounds of days gone by with the influence of artists such as Stevie Nicks/Fleetwood Mac, The Beatles and Queen shining through. Arielle is a gifted guitarist, but this is not your typical virtuoso album, it is so much more.

ADAM KENNEDY





**“this is not your typical virtuoso album - it is so much more”**

## ALLY VENABLE

### HEART OF FIRE

*Ruf Records*

This is the fourth release from Texan guitarist singer songwriter and her band, Elijah Owings on drums and Bobby Wallace on bass. They are also joined by Devon Allman who played and co-wrote the track, Bring On The Pain, a song about doomed relationships, this intertwines bitter sweet lyrics with similar toned guitar work. It was produced by Jim Gaines at Bessie Blue Studio in Tennessee. Opener, Heart Of Fire is a fire-cracker, inspiring and positive, it keeps a great tone. Played The Game is a highlight and has Kenny Wayne Shepherd, guesting and it's such a powerful song, a guitar masterclass. Ally pays tribute to her idols on this eleven track release,



**“the artistry of guitar work is superb and sounds effortless”**

she mixes Bessie Smith's Hateful Blues and adds some full on power, an excellent reinterpretation. She collaborated with Lance Lopez on the hard hitting, Hard Change, Ally's vocals carry the tune and it has a great riff. Do It In Heels, has a real Texan blues twist. Sad Situation is another highlight. There is a real spine tingling hook to this song. The band funks it up a notch on the Bill Withers song Use Me, just a stunning version. Tribute To SRV is an absolute masterpiece, listen and savour every note, the artistry of guitar work is superb and sounds effortless, Ally is the real deal and has the blues vibe here. What Do You Want From Me, packs a punchy finish to her best album to date.

COLIN CAMPBELL



## ANDREA BLACK

### HARVEST GOLD

*Teddy D*

Nottinghamshire-born singer/songwriter/guitarist and pianist Andrea has a quite fascinating backstory, some of it related in "Blue Bloods" in BM#118. She learned South American songs as a youngster, was a close associate of John Lee Hooker, spending a long time as a guest at his house, just missed out on the chance to record for the Indigo label, and opening for Eric Burdon in San Francisco. "Her style crosses genres," says her publicity, and this album certainly bears out that statement. There are traces of Latin American music and I detect the influence of Billie Holiday in places in Andrea's vocals. Mind you, I also hear Joni Mitchell, Kate Bush and maybe Sheryl Crow, and musically, the album perhaps leans more towards those last three names rather than the blues performers. The opening track recalled southern gospel

***"it is certainly enjoyable and entertaining"***

in its musical introduction, I Want To Be The One is a blues number with some appropriate acoustic guitar work, Tell Me has a bluesy jazz arrangement, with, to my ears, just a hint of Billie Holiday in the slinky vocal, and Jumpin' Jeanie Beanie is bright and breezy, blues-oriented Americana. On the distaff side, I Pour Myself Like Wine has a hint of tango, and Strange Girl has more than a tinge of a Brazilian bossa-nova inflected arrangement. And Kate Bush? Well, try the closing number Sam's Castle, and I think you'll agree with me. So, a rootsy singer/songwriter set, some of it is most definitely not the blues, though there are certainly some songs and arrangements that do suggest Andrea's blues links. But it is certainly enjoyable and entertaining.

NORMAN DARWEN



## ZED MITCHELL

### ROUTE 69

*Timezone  
Records CD*



Dusseldorf's Zed Mitchell is a brilliant rock blues guitar player and an interesting vocalist, often reminiscent of Mark Knopfler. As a composer and songwriter, he looks back on more than 20 released albums. Route 69 is a quality product, smartly packaged with a 12-page booklet containing all the lyrics, each number composed by the man himself. This recording reveals that there is a lot going on in Europe and Mitchell has a 50-year career behind

***"This is an album worthy of several listens"***

him. His songs are poetic and direct. For example, The Girl That Broke Your Heart tells us 'You got to run with the rhythm, every step of the way, run with ideas, that can sometimes change, run into the future, and forget about the past, pages of history, make sure that it all lasts.' All this is underpinned by some of the smoothest, velvety guitar playing around. Is this a blues album? Not entirely. Mitchell is an emotive writer, evocative, thoughtful, enthusiastic, and exhilarating, just let yourself be swept away by From My Dreams. He does rock steady with songs like Life Will Always Find You. If you want sheer romance, Midnight Melody will light a few candles.

This is an album worthy of several listens. It is like JJ Cale, it has got a touch of jazziness, style, and panache. Sophisticated European Blues? Yes, this is surely it.

ROY BAINTON

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**BLUESMATTERS.COM**



## DR. FEELGOOD GREATEST HITS

*Grand Records*

Well, what can you say about Dr. Feelgood that hasn't been said already? Quite a lot actually. This 2 CD set is so well put together and covers their 50-year career brilliantly. Yes, I said 50-year career. I had to check that myself because it seems like only yesterday that the booming R n B sound came pounding out of Canvey Island in 1971. The CD is littered with hit after hit with loads of live tunes thrown in for good measure. This album will have you dancing around from start to finish with a huge smile on your face. From the opening track, *She Does It Right*, you are reminded of just how good this band is. I say are, because they are still going strong to this day, with a couple of personnel changes. What I've always loved about The Fellgoods are the short sharp catchy tunes. No boring solos or overproduced stuff, just hard-hitting music with a hearty nod to Lee Brilleaux's main influence, Howlin' Wolf. Roxette has always been one of my go-to Dr. Feelgood songs. Machine gun-like tempo with a steady drumbeat and superb harmonica. I could talk about this album for a fortnight, but space and time forbid me. *Riot In Cell Block No 9*, is one of the live tracks on offer. If you ever wanted to know what Dr. Feelgood is all about, I suggest that you give this a listen. *Milk & Alcohol* is probably the most well-known track that the band released. It can be one of those tunes that we will still be listening to fifty years from now. *Shotgun Blues* is as blues as you could get. This is another live take which makes it even more enjoyable. Disc 2 continues in much the same fashion, churning out masterpiece after masterpiece. *See You Later Alligator* gets a brilliant outing as one of just a few covers on the album. Listening to it put a huge smile on my face. But that is what Dr. Feelgood has been doing for the last fifty years. *Down At The Doctors* is another stalwart of their back catalogue. Such a brilliant tune. Simplicity with grace and feeling is how I would describe it. This album deserves to be in every blues lover's collection. I'm glad to say that it is now in mine.

**STEPHEN HARRISON**

## ELLES BAILEY AIN'T NOTHING BUT

*Independent*



This album of covers is drawn from three live-streamed shows recorded during this difficult lockdown period and is sub-titled "stripped back & bare to the bone". We open with John Prine's plaintive song *I Remember*

Everything featuring Elles' fine

vocal set against a rolling acoustic guitar. Next up is a new song to me the Highwomen's country song *Crowded Table* with a passionate vocal from Elles and this is followed by the familiar John/Taupin classic *Border Song*. Paul Simon's wonderful song *Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover* works well in this spare setting. The raw emotion of Mary Gauthier's *Mercy Now* is followed by the tour-de-force of John Prine's classic *Angel From Montgomery*. Fine sympathetic backing comes from Joe Wilkins, Phil King and Joe James but it is Elles superb gritty country-blues vocals that catch the ear. The second half of the album takes on a much bluesier feel with Leadbelly's eerie and haunting *Where Did You Sleep Last Night*. Kansas Joe McCoy's much covered *When The Levee Breaks* leads us into the slow burning soulful

**"but it is Elles superb gritty country-blues vocals that catch the ear"**

favourite *Ain't No Love In The Heart Of the City* with strong harmony vocals. Another highlight is Ben Harper's song *No Mercy In This Land* featuring shimmering slide guitar and impassioned vocals. Willie Dixon's old warhorse *Spoonful* is given a slow atmospheric treatment that features a hot slide guitar solo from Joe Wilkins. A favourite track of mine back in the late 60's was *Stephen Stills For What It's Worth* which gets a bluesy workover. The album closes with a rave up on Bo Diddley's stomping *You Can't Judge A Book By Looking At The Cover*. Nice one! I enjoyed this album thoroughly and will be looking out for Elles Bailey when she records some new material and is able to start touring again.

**DAVE DRURY**

## TEXMANIANS

### BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

*Independent*

This band have a look and feel of a USA group but are in fact a Norwegian band from Bergen who ply their heavy blues rock sound to great effect. A twin guitar, four-piece band whose inspiration is 1970's British rock fused with Texan Blues. The British influence is very clear, and this album could have been marketed as a "long lost gem" from 1973. The British influence does not stop there as the late Tony Mills provides background vocals and Magnum's Rick Benton provides keyboard support on many tracks. The ten tracks all follow in a similar vein with head down rocking to the fore with hardly any time to take a breath. It is certainly fast and furious but there are some good musicians in the mix here with vocalist and guitarist Svein Heimvik a standout leader. My initial thoughts were that his vocals were a bit light but on repeated plays this concern has diminished, as he wins his battle with the thumping bass and drums hands down. From a production



***"This album shows plenty of potential if you like your blues hot & heavy and is a standard bearer for the strong Norwegian music scene"***

perspective I found the sound a bit mushy, the album would have benefited from having a slightly sharper mix. Notwithstanding this, there are some excellent tracks including the title track Brooklyn Heights which has an anthem feel to it with its repeated chorus, preceded by Rebel where the twin guitar attack comes to the fore in a Thin Lizzy style rocker. This is the band's second album following their debut No Man's Land which was released in 2017. This album shows plenty of potential if you like your blues hot & heavy and is a standard bearer for the strong Norwegian music scene.

ADRIAN BLACKLEE

## JOHN TOWNLEY

### THE OLD SAILOR



*The Lollipop Shoppe CD*

John Townley. The name seems familiar and being an old sailor myself I cut straight to the title track on this CD and we are in a comfortable chamber of Americana complete with banjo and fiddle. This is a blend of grown-up folk'n'blues which cannot fail to satisfy. Townley's no spring chicken, his work goes back to the 1968 double album The Family Apostolic and he was once guitarist with garage folk rock legends The Magicians (1965-66). He studied guitar with Rev. Gary Davis in the early 60s, as impressive a page in your blues passport as any. His guitar playing is superb. So, this album gives one a feel of that

***"Very enjoyable music by a gifted elder musical statesman"***

period in New York when Dylan first started out, those atmospheric coffee houses and folk venues which produced so much down-home acoustic talent. These are songs of maturity, know-how and experience. Townley's notes about each track are welcome accompaniments to the performances. For example, he describes The Old Sailor as 'sea saga to a mountain tune' and the esoteric Flisackawa Zona, a traditional song, 'a Polish Wisla River rafter song from the 18th century, in archaic Kashubian dialect, about the bleak, lonely journey hundreds of miles down the river...' There is a jolly Memphis Jug Band entry, Stealin', some Skip James, and the song Delia's Gone which he tells us he 'learned at the knees of a dockside goombay band in Nassau, the year Queen Elizabeth II was crowned'. This is an admirable album which not only entertains, it nurtures and preserves tradition, and the varied instrumental skills complete the effort. Very enjoyable music by a gifted elder musical statesman.

ROY BAINTON





## A.J. CROCE BY REQUEST

*Compass Records*

For thirty years, AJ Croce has been plying his trade as a virtuoso piano player with a vocal style to match the many different musical genres he is influenced by. Here, he concentrates on twelve songs that have been most requested by friends or he has played live to his fans. It is a full on live release with his distinguished band. They are, Garrett Stoner on guitar, David Barard on bass and Gary Mallaber on drums. The songs chronicle his life, encompassing many styles. Opener, Billy Preston's Nothing From Nothing sets the tone. Neil Young's Only Love Can Break Your Heart, has a gospel tinge. Boyhood hero Randy Newman gets the treatment on, Have You Seen My Baby. Sam Cooke's Nothing Can Change This Love, has the soul vibe. Better Day, the Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee tune, has Robben Ford guesting and is powerful. He turns the Five Steps, Ooh Baby into a crescendo of soul, great harmonies Stay With Me, The Faces number is note for note perfection with AJ's gruff vocals suiting the arrangement. Allen Toussaint's Brickyard Blues brings the New Orleans party

***"He hangs onto every note - there's something here for any music lover"***

feel. Tom Waits' San Diego Serenade is rapturous. Brian Wilson's Sail On Sailor has a trippy blues deconstruction of the song, beautiful piano feel. Solomon Burke's Can't Nobody Love You is sung so sweetly. He hangs onto every note. Finally The Temptations, Ain't No Justice is given a piano funky groove. Something here for any music lover.

COLIN CAMPBELL

## DOWN HOME BLUES: MIAMI, ATLANTA

AND THE SOUTH  
EASTERN STATES



*Wienerworld 3CD set*

29 different artists, 3 packed CDs. For a blues fan such projects as this represent a labour of love and a journey of discovery. You know you are

onto a good thing when you see that these tracks have been curated by none other than Peter Moody and Chris Bentley. If you've not heard of Poor Jim, Rudy Greene. Tommy Malone or Danny Boy Thomas, here they all are, with many more artists, re-appearing through the mists of time. We're basically familiar with the historic geography of the Blues: Mississippi, New Orleans, Chicago, and California. Here we're exploring Miami and the South Eastern States over a period stretching from 1941 to 1962. The opening tracks on disk one includes Three Woman Blues by Frank Edwards and the wonderful I keep on Drinkin' by Curley Weaver. The sound quality of these records is exemplary, and Weaver's 12 string guitar solos are uplifting. It's also amazing how many record labels are covered here; some familiar, like Decca, Okeh or Bullet, others Irma, Cam, Free, Apache and Joyette less so. You'll love the joyous sounds of Poor Jim and his Heartbreakers from 1950 playing Spots Boogie and Brand New Woman, complete with terrific piano from Sleepy Joe and Jim's forceful kazoo. The guitar is big, fat and in your face for the period - sounds a lot like T-Bone Walker. Ray's other offering is his soulful, soaring vocal on Why Did You Go. Tommy Malone's I'm Wading in Deep Water is a great heartfelt blues about grief. Disk 3 kicks off with the powerful guitar and vocals of Earl Hooker's 1953 Sweet Angel. If you want something that sounds like an alternate version of Hound Dog, try the fiery Straighten Up Juice Head. I cannot recommend this collection highly enough. It demonstrates that no matter how old you are, how long you've been listening to blues, both obscure or familiar, that the well of this music is so much deeper than we think and that there's always much more to discover. Wonderful package, terrific, detailed notes, illustrations (there is even some steam locomotives!) and sessionography, so go on, treat yourself, this is an essential for every Blues aficionado.

ROY BAINTON

## GHALIA VOLT

ONE WOMAN BAND



Ruf Records

This is Ghalia's follow up to Mississippi Blend, and sees her evolving in her musical style. After the last year, all artists have been affected in some way with the pandemic. Ghalia decided to make this a positive and go back to her roots as a solo artist. She began busking around Belgium and here she takes us on a blues musical odyssey via a train ride she had through America. She plays all instruments on this eleven track album recorded at the legendary Royal Studios in Memphis and produced by Lawrence Boo Mitchell. Last Minute Packer sets the scene on this release, it has a stomping rhythm throughout and the recording is sensational. Espirito Papago, features Dean Zuccherro, on a haunting tune, mixing delta groove with some psychedelia, a great tale. Can't

***"Raw, upbeat, stylish traditional blues at its best"***

Escape keeps that earthy rhythm going, some great vocals, very catchy. Evil Thoughts is a highlight, with Monster Mike Welch jamming in. Meet Me in My Dreams has a slower vibe some great slide guitar tones. Reap What You Sow, is pacy! Loving You Is A Full Time Job, has a sultry feel. It Hurts Me Too is a great reinterpretation. It Ain't Bad is toxically catchy. Bad Apple is Hill country blues at its best. Last track, Just One More Time, has Dean and Mike jamming along. Raw, upbeat, stylish traditional blues at its best. Play on repeat and dance like there's no one in the room, this is spectacular,

COLIN CAMPBELL

## VARIOUS

MATCHBOX BLUES-MASTER SERIES SET 2

Saydisc Records



The second set in this peerless retrospective of vintage blues recordings turns the spotlight on country blues and the great harp players from 1927 to 1932. First up is Nehemiah James, nicknamed Skippy as a child acknowledging his dancing skills, and becoming Skip James, blues legend, with all his recordings captured here. Highlight is the skilful guitar picking on I'm So Glad which shines through the poor recording quality. Disc 2 features the more upbeat music of the string bands who featured at picnics and parties, and town squares. The third disc in the set turns its attention to the aforementioned harp players, and the evocation of train sounds on tracks like Narrow Gauge Blues help the listener to tolerate the uniformly poor quality of the sounds, no doubt mastered from vintage 78's. Piano blues fans will be happy to hear the complete recordings of Leroy Carr from 1928 collected here on one CD. There is a rise in the musical sophistication on offer here, compared with the raw painful blues stories elsewhere in the collection. The next set is the entire collection of Tommie Bradley and James Cole, and by now blues bands were expanding in terms of personal employed, instruments played, and a greater range than the pure country blues that dominated black music up to the early nineteen-thirties. Charley Lincoln's recordings complete this excellent box-set history of early blues, his rich voice carries all the expression of the times and circumstances in which Lincoln lived and recorded. This album is the next in a fascinating set of vintage blues recordings being released for the entertainment and education of the blues scholar, but let's not forget the avid listeners who read about such collections and should be steered towards these compilations to find out the rich heritage and even greater influences that these early blues masters were to bring on the artists who followed, developing their basic earthy styles in the multiple blues styles and genres that followed, and continue to follow today. Without doubt, the birth of blues music started with tracks like this. Utterly fascinating.

ANDY HUGHES

## KATIE BRADLEY & PETE FARRUGIA

SOHO HEART

*Independent*

Katie Bradley has a true feeling for the blues whether singing or playing harmonica. She remains the real deal and her live shows capture that essence. Her new release is collaboration with Pete Farrugia, a South London musician, singer songwriter and guitarist. This is a collection of twelve original soul and blues tunes including the quirky instrumental, Chickpea Curry. This has a Latino riff with Ron Roesing's drumming keeping a catchy beat. Tell Me About It, seems a riposte to the Billy Joel popular hit, mellow tones here.



***“Blues and soul styles are here - an uplifting release to savour.”***

I Already Know is a slow Chicago blues number well delivered vocals mixing with haunting horns. Solo Heat has an upbeat tempo, with a lilting saxophone solo from Dom Thatcher and backing vocals by Katie. Her vocals are no stronger than on the wistful; Willow Man. Mysterious Ways has a jazzy waltz feel. Sweet guitar backs reflective lyrics. Does Your Star Shine Brighter, has a funky catchy beat, a happy tune. Gaslight, sees Katie getting sassy and funky, the guitar riff undertones this score, she plays harmonica in a vignette performance here. Keep On Wishing carries a steady rhythm. Take A Ride is up-tempo hard driven honky tonk blues with Dan Edwards on piano, Katie sings and plays harmonica here. Soul driven, Jump This Ship sees the rhythm section underpin a great song. Katie's vocals lift the final song, Raise The Game. Blues and soul styles are here - an uplifting release to savour.

COLIN CAMPBELL

## JO CARLEY AND THE OLD DRY SKULLS

VOODOO BONES & VAUDEVILLE BLUES



*Old Higue Records*

Jo Carley and The Old Dry Skulls play a unique hybrid of early 20th century music infused with dark imagery. Intense and compelling, they combine 1930s voodoo sounds with a steamy broth of vaudeville, blues, skiffle, early ska, old-timey country and folk. The band consists of Jo Carley lead vocals, backing vocals, mandolin, fiddle, washboard, keys, and percussion. Tim Carley guitars, kick drum, rattling' shoe percussion and backing vocals, James le Huray double bass electric bass, banjo, keys, sansula, stylophone and backing vocals. Voodoo Bones & Vaudeville Blues is the bands third album and was recorded during lockdown in the bands tiny shack of a house on the east coast of England. They threw out the couch and TV, turning the living room into a recording studio laying down twelve new songs using only old school techniques and a few good microphones. The album opens with the upbeat bluesy beat of Little Limbs Of Satan. Like Charlie you will be soon dancing to the dead beat. Up next is a bit

***“An excellent album to keep you awake at night”***

of vaudeville theatre skiffle with The Zombie. This flows into The Devil with the double bass driving this along with a rock n roll feel. Some fast-paced rockabilly with a driving rhythm will have you up and dancing on She Got Him (With Her Voodoo). The following song, Lose Your Soul has a Country gospel vibe to i., Next up is The Jungle with James on Sansula giving the song a calypso ska feel that gets the feet tappin. Continuing the theme is The Witchdoctor with a vaudeville ska feel. Starting with a slow-pace Dead But He Won't Lay Down has a old-timey country feel running throughout, while this is followed by the uptempo acoustic blues of Under Your Spell. The wonderful haunting instrumental Crowhurst's Lament follows, a sea shanty vibe is given to Shipwreck Blues, the album closes in fine style with the excellent The Bone Readers. An excellent album to keep you awake at night.

SHIRL



## JOYANN PARKER

### OUT OF THE DARK

*Hopeless Romantic Records*

This is one of those CDs where you really do not 'judge the book by the cover'. The cover image might lead one to think of non-Blues, older musical stylings/cabaret but by the lord that would have been such a mistake. Joyann is another example of the Blues coming out of Minneapolis. Joyann has a great voice and this is a very fine album! The cover image of her looking into the mirror asks; "what do you see here?" Well, I can tell you that this album reflects very highly a spread of feeling and emotion, mood and joy. Everything works here. Fine musicians, fine songs, fine production. Style varies through Blues-rock-gospel-Americana-Rhythm & Blues all fare well here. An expressive voice gives each song its own power and dignity aided by a great bunch of musicians across a broad representation of touching trumpets, flitting harmonicas, keys, strings, flute, saxes and neat slide

***"Joyann has a great voice and this is a very fine album!"***

guitar. A joyous cocktail of rhythms and beats to lift you up in these tough times. A moody intro to Gone So Long kicks us off and makes a great starter as it lopes along almost lazily. Carry On does just that and lifts the pace as we learn to get the depth of this voice knowing already there is more breadth of it to come. Neat electric piano intro for Bad Version Of Myself, we probably all know that part of ourselves, this has power combined with gentle, breezy harmonica. Beautiful voice flows over gentle slide and acoustic on Either Way, lovely song. The 'annoyed' Joyann belts it on Dirty Rotten Guy with some neat brass and piano flowing. Then we get a bit of swing and jive before Hit Me Like A Train does that to you! Loving the slide, drums run through at a pace and Joyann lets loose. This fine album closes with the title track Out Of The Dark.

ALAN PEARCE

## SCRAPPER BLACKWELL

### COLLECTION 1928-61



*Acrobat Music*

43 tracks, over two CDs, selected from his career is a fine way to explore the output for this largely unrecognised exponent of single note soloing. Of course this would become, arguably, the most widely expressive way for guitarists to make an impact on our world of music. It should be noted though that, whilst the title covers a huge time frame, most of Scrapper's recordings come from the period up to 1935/6. He returned to making records in 1958 but was shot and killed in 1962 on the cusp of the massive rediscovery of early Blues musicians by emerging artists such as

***"Scrapper recorded it and Eric made it famous again and what better legacy is there than that."***

Dylan, Clapton and others. Kokomo Blues, re-worked and monikered by James Kokomo Arnold and rewritten as Sweet Home Chicago by Robert Johnson, opens CD 1. Whatever the actual origins of the song by any measure this is a classic and will always remain so. You have the chance to contrast and compare Penal Farm Blues as it is included here twice once from 1928 and the other from 1961. The latter has a very much more of a soloing style but for sure the essence can still be heard on the first version. Trouble Blues has been split into Pt1 and Pt2 which I am guessing is how it was released but it is very clear that this is one song. There are a couple of cuts which feature long time collaborator Leroy Carr, Non Skid Tread and Be-Da-Da-Bum plus Scrapper's homage's to Leroy in My Old Pal Blues and Bad Liquor Blues. Included is the brilliant cover Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out from 1961. Jimmie Cox wrote it, Scrapper recorded it and Eric made it famous again and what better legacy is there than that.

GRAEME SCOTT



## WILDCAT O'HALLORAN BAND

YOU CAN'T FALL OFF THE FLOOR

*Independent*

Definitely what it says on the tin, a unique spin on the blues. With a rhythm section, Mark Cl-houinard and Dave Kendaring, Kathy Peterson, bassist and the unerring ears and jazz skills of sax player extraordinaire Emily Duff (rescued from a cruise ship adrift in the Atlantic as Covid

***“this album is full of mischief and storytelling, personal to Cat and his band”***

hit!!) that lends a depth and sophistication to the straight-talking Wildcat and his lyrics. It is a mix of 50 years immersion in blues culture and the story of our times. With a nod to Howlin Wolf... which turns into a 7-minute wild ride and a nod to Johnny Copeland's inclusion in the hall of fame as well as dropping off Facebook to concentrate on a album he wanted to make in case this really was, the end of our time. The sax runs through this album giving it, to me a jazz feel as well as at times a honkytonk, rock'n'roll feel, all the time the expertise of the musicians lends a depth and beat to the entire album, every song. There is a feel of the US to this album and when O'Halloran tells the story of Emily being stuck on the cruise ship you can feel the US deeply in the voice. Something of Track 12 made me think of a musical theatre parody, this album is full of mischief and storytelling, personal to Cat and his band. Sounds like they had a lot of fun and decided that, should this be the end of the world as we know it, they wanted to leave a little of their loves, their stories and their great love of music and performing.

JEAN KNAPPITT

## KATIE KNIPP

THE WELL

*independent*

It's not very often that an album comes along, and it makes you smile from start to finish on the first listen. But that certainly was the case with the latest offering from Californian blues artist Katie Knipp. The album, which is titled *The Well* features five tracks, but in our opinion, it gets a five-star rating. *The Well* traverses a lot of ground musically, but it's all blues at the heart. The opening track *Sad Eyed Lover* is an uplifting, raucous number with a hint of Bourbon Street, New Orleans influence. The number immediately gets your attention whilst simultaneously showcasing Katie's powerhouse vocals. With *The Gospel of Good Intentions* there is a hint in the title as to the song's musical contents. The song is spellbinding yet heart-felt, with sultry vocal delivery from Knipp. And both the addition of horns and keys add a nice texture to the overall composition of the song. Knipp takes the listener to the Delta with foot-stomping blues number *Better Me*. Performed with aid of a Dobro, the song features some majestic slide guitar play and is certainly one of the standout tracks of the release. Now Chamomile and Cocaine may sound like an in-



***“If you are looking for an album to ‘Knipp’ your lockdown blues in the bud, then look no further than *The Well*”***

teresting combination, but it's a metaphor that Katie has used to describe her personality. The funky yet sultry number comes complete with tongue in cheek lyricism and conjures up images of contemporary blues greats such as Beth Hart. And the rocky breakdown mid-song is also of note. The final track of the release *Bullet Train* is layered with blues harp and lashings of slide guitar. This track truly showcases Katie's impressive vocal range. If you are looking for an album to 'Knipp' your lockdown blues in the bud, then look no further than *The Well*. As the old saying goes, all's well that ends well and that's certainly the case with this release.

ADAM KENNEDY

## MARTIN LANG

### BAD MAN

*Random Chance Records*

Martin Lang is an American blues harmonica player, vocalist, and songwriter. Lang has been playing harmonica in Chicago for nearly three decades learning his craft backing legendary bluesmen including Tail Dragger, Willie Buck, and Oscar Wilson. Moving from sideman to centre stage, Lang is laying down harmonica and vocals with support from Little Frank (guitar), Billy Flynn (guitar, mandolin), Illinois Slim (bass), Gerry Hundt (organ), David Walkman (piano) and Dean Hass (drums). The album is produced by Dick Shurman giving *Bad Man* the feel and sound of an authentic Chess Chicago electric blues record, with eight original tracks and four covers. The album starts with a laid-back Chicago blues tempo that befits the track *Reefer Head Man*. A cover of Jerry McCain's *Juice Lucy* is up next and soon gets the feet tapping as the band get down and grooving with an infectious Latin vibe. The piano and harp complement each other on a superb cover of Dusty Brown's *He Don't Love You Taking the pace back up with the instrumental High As A Georgia Pine*, with the double bass underpins the whole tune. Lang blows some wonderfully toned harp. The rhythm section lay down a rolling groove with guitar and piano

***"A wonderful album that evokes the feel of Chicago's Chess era, highly recommended"***

adding great support to Lang's vocals and harp riffs on *Younger Days*. Great interplay between guitar and harp drives a fine cover of Little Sonny's *The Mix* up. The band add some fresh feel to the title track a cover of Hayes Ware's *Bad Man*. Up next the Little Frank track *Bookers Boogie* is an infectious groove with Frank playing slide, Flynn caressing mandolin and Lang blowing some mean harp. The funkier *I Worry My Mind Over* gets the feet tapping, the pace drops for the late-night feel of the beautifully crafted *Mood Indica*, with the shuffle. It's *All Gone Now* taking us to the album closer *Stacy's On My Feet* an ode to the late Eddie Taylor Jr on which Lang plays Guitar, A wonderful album that evokes the feel of Chicago's Chess era, highly recommended.

SHIRL



## CATFISH KEITH

### BLUES AT MID-NIGHT- THE ORIGINAL SONGS OF CATFISH KEITH

*Fish Tail Records*

For more than thirty years, the virtuoso acoustic and resonator guitar player and singer Catfish Keith has toured the world, delighting audiences of all sizes, and releasing many critically acclaimed albums. *Blues at Midnight* is a mostly acoustic, solo album, making great use of Catfish's guitar playing and rich baritone voice. He is joined on *Move To Louisiana* by fiddle player Randy Sabien, and harmonica player Peter Mudcat Ruth appears on *Oh, Mr Catfish*. All the pieces are songs, except for the haunting, minimalist *West Indian Waltz*, a wistful tone poem for National slide guitar. Although these pieces are all originals, they show Catfish Keith's influences, ranging from Joseph Spence, Johnny

***"an audience always knows what to expect, virtuoso musicianship, and some interesting songs, and sometimes, that is all you need"***

Shines, Robert Johnson, and Lonnie Johnson. The fast-paced *Xima Jo Road* kicks things off in grand style, whilst *Jumpin' Jack Rabbit* is an exercise in swampy guitar noise. Although many of the songs take similar ideas and patterns as starting parts, there is more than enough variety to maintain listening interest. *Pony Run* adds ragtime guitar intricacy to the mix, alongside an almost confessional vocal delivery. Catfish Keith is a well-known name on the acoustic music scene. His blend of seemingly effortless musical delivery and easy onstage mannerisms means that an audience always knows what to expect, virtuoso musicianship, and some interesting songs, and sometimes, that is all you need.

BEN MACNAIR







## CURTIS SALGADO

### DAMAGE CONTROL

*Alligator Records*

Curtis Salgado started writing this album in 2017. It's been quite a journey from then to finally release the finished article. Let me tell you something. It was well worth the wait. There are thirteen tracks on the album and everyone is a gem. The Longer That I Live kicks off the album with the amazing vocal range that Salgado has and the accompanying piano and organ give this such a gospel feel. It gave me a feeling of happiness from the get-go which continues throughout the album. You're Going To Miss My Sorry Ass is not exactly a song title that trips off the tongue, but it is a wonderful tune nevertheless.

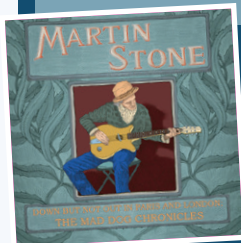
### ***"the whole album is superb"***

The boogie style piano resonates through the whole song adding blues and soul with more than a hint of gospel. That is pretty much the theme of the album. I'd love to be listening to this as I drive across America with the roof down. Precious Time leans more towards the blues than the previous tracks and has wonderful harmonies from the backing vocals. The overall vocals here are as good as you will hear anywhere for a very long time. Simply divine. The underlying feeling that I get from this album is the feeling of being happy listening to it. Every tune makes me smile with contentment. The mix of gospel, blues, and soul is so well-orchestrated. I Don't Do That No More travels along like a train on a track. Boogie piano, R 'n' B, and bluesy vocals, what's not to like. I've no doubt that when live music returns this will be a crowd favourite at every gig Salgado plays. The title track Damage Control, for me, is the stand-out track on the album. Every song is brilliant and so well crafted, but this just has the edge. The whole album is superb from start to finish. Parts of it are so gospel, it's wearing its Sunday best suit and polished shoes. Gospel blues and soul all on one album. Bravo.

STEPHEN HARRISON

## MARTIN STONE

### DOWN BUT NOT OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON



*Shagrat Records MAD DOG 4 x CD Box Set*

Oh boy, for those aficionados remembering the name of Martin Stone, here is a superb presentation box set. The quality of this sturdy box cover containing

a four-CD fold-out, again with strong cover, and a 47-page book, again with strong cover. You do not see much of this quality which makes it so worth mentioning. Martin sadly departed us on 9th November 2016. This is indeed a musical celebration of his life and the liner notes are by good friend Nigel Cross with contributions from some of his fellow musicians along the journey. Martin's bands included; Savoy Brown (where he was joint lead guitar honours with founder Kim Simmonds for a spell) Mighty Baby, Chilli Willi & the Red Hot Peppers, Uncle Dog, Jive Bombers, The Action, The Pink Fairies. As punk rose its' head Martin stepped out and lost himself in the world of books, antique books, and another musical venture known as Les Homewreckers to name some, but not all, of his collaborations. Amongst his influences were The 3 Kings, Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin and Otis

### ***"This is indeed a musical celebration of his life"***

Rush. His playing style was something special and respected by many. Once he was busking in Paris when Stephen Grapelli came by and enjoying what he heard put down his case and brought out his violin to join in! Martin spent much time flitting about simply popping-up unexpectedly here and there making his contributions then not seemingly able to stay in one place or one musical group for long enough to actually 'establish' his name. He was a varied and capable musician who played styles across the board in folk, rockabilly, blues, country even punk and psychedelic. This set has been gathered from cassette tapes, sessions, rehearsals and Nigel has worked closely with Martin's family on board to pull this superb, loving set together. There is a to here to interest here, varied, eclectic, strange maybe but I tell you it is fun as well. This set is worth investigating if you knew of him but missed much of his work.

ALAN PEARCE

## MIKE FELTON

FAST  
MIKEY  
BLUE EYES

Landfill  
Records

Fourth album I have got my ears around today and now we get into real Blues territory, albeit with echoes of Americana and Folk within the mix. So a bit of a gumbo for sure but does it all work? Well yes it sure does for this Chicago musician. If you enjoy your Blues with wailing harmonicas, rolling barrel-house piano, acoustic guitars alongside of drums and bass then do check this release. Songs about drinking, seeking love where you can find it, cars etc will always resonate with people and Mike's original songs cover exactly those topics. Three Drinks In gets us underway and immediately you are aware of just how beautifully this collection has been recorded. It has a lovely "all playing live together in the



***"A very enjoyable listen throughout so do grab a listen if you can"***

same room" feel. It would have been fun to be part of these sessions. No blurb came with the album but on his website he states that these songs have been road tested over many gigs and it shows. Everyone knows their parts well on Detroit Woman and the fantastically titled Dead Old Girlfriend bringing a real sense of humour to proceedings. I like the pairing of that and the immediately following See That My Grave Is Kept Clean (Blind Lemon Jefferson). I am not one hundred percent sure as there are no writing credits anywhere on the packaging, but I firmly believe that to be the only cover. All the songs have a kind of original authenticity to them which makes them feel like they have come from former times. Twelve tracks in total which close out with Like Listening To Charlie Parker. A very enjoyable listen throughout so do grab a listen if you can.

GRAEME SCOTT

## GREG SOVER BAND

THE PARADE



GSB

Philadelphia's up-and-coming blues-rock outfit The Greg Sover Band impressed me with their two previous albums, Songs Of A Renegade and Jubilee. This time around The Parade offers the listener six tracks on a 21-minute-long CD EP. Leader Greg sings and plays various guitars, including a resonator guitar with which he drives along Feelin' Sumthing; it sounds more than a little like Eric Sardinas, and that is no bad thing in my book. It's Never Too Late reminds me of the late 60s California folk-rock sound. That might sound a little outlandish perhaps, but then, Greg also turns in a creditable cover of Cream's 1968 blues-rock classic Politician, with its rather cynical and pointed lyrics a natural for an election year in the USA, of course (which was when this set first saw the light of day, and not just any old election of course). The heavier side of the man's music is also evident on the opener, an all too aptly titled rocker called Wake Up, a look at race relations in the States. It is followed by a short Interlude from a musical tribute to George Floyd from a work by harpist Gloria Galante (and that is not harp as in "blues harp") whilst the last

***"A nicely varied showcase for a very talented young bluesman"***

number, Never Gonna Stop, rides some heavy riffing guitar work and tinges of Jimi Hendrix. A nicely varied showcase for a very talented young bluesman then. Greg is backed by Allen James on electric guitar, Garry Lee on bass, Tom Walling on drums, and Wally Smith guests on keyboards. Those names might not mean much here in the UK, but that could change easily and quickly if Greg and his band keep putting out material like this!

NORMAN DARWEN



## STEADY ROLLIN'

### LOVE & LOSS

*Independent*

Think Led Zeppelin, think Cream or Rory Gallagher, and you have Steady Rollin'. They are a trio from the South American state of El Salvador, perhaps not a location you would expect a band like this to hail from. This 12 track CD came as a press sample with no information, and there is no track listing, but it is an impressive production. Their website, however, is inspiring. They are a blues/rock band comprising Benjamin Andrade on percussion, Gerardo Pardo on bass and Fernando Poma on guitar and vocals, who writes all the music and lyrics.

***"If you have been missing Rush or Metallica, and you like your blues rock loud and strident, Steady Rollin' will fit the bill nicely"***

The first single from this album, Love & Loss, is When Judgement Comes, complete with epic guitar chords which gives you a good impression of a powerful trio who only ever perform live, even in the studio. The songs are well crafted, but the limitations of the power trio do sometimes require a bit more light and shade. Love & Loss is the first full release from Steady Rollin', perceptive songs which tell love-related stories from Fernando's real-life experiences.

This is powerful stuff with a backbone of emotional blues. They know how to get the best from this line-up, and Fernando Poma's sweeping guitar style will leave you in no doubt that they will not stay long in El Salvador's borders, this is really big transatlantic music with a keen market. If you have been missing Rush or Metallica, and you like your blues rock loud and strident, Steady Rollin' will fit the bill nicely.

ROY BAINTON

## GARY MOORE

### HOW BLUE CAN YOU GET

*Mascot/Provogue*



The opening track "I'm Tore Down", a great rocking blues from Freddy King - nice Hammond, great bluesy riffs. Gary's really jamming out the blues rock solos to get the party started in fine style! "Stepping

Out", a great blues rock instrumental classic from Memphis Slim, also well known by John Mayall Blues Breakers. Really gets you into the groove with great jamming blues riffs, again Gary's showing us how much he really loves to jam the blues! "In My Dreams", a slow bluesy ballad with some really nice chord changes. I love the orchestral strings behind it, gives a real dreamy mood. Gary's haunting guitar solos are truly Divine as always! "How Blue Can You Get" Gary's extended version of the BB King classic, has a nice "cool" vibe. A one-minute dreamy instrumental intro, catchy guitar riffs throughout. "Looking At Your Picture" catchy riffs and rhythmic beat with slide guitar, another treasure! "Love Can Make A Fool of You" with its slow blues intro really

***"An album that every Gary Moore blues fan is going to love"***

sets the mood for this love ballad, the sustained Hammond gives a nice atmospheric feel, and those unmistakable guitar solos - Gary makes that guitar truly sing! "Done Somebody Wrong" blues rock from Elmore James, with a great groove, growling Hammond, screaming guitar solos, Gary loves to bend those strings! "Living With the Blues" time to slow down with a slow bluesy ballad. Again, the ambience of the Hammond helps set the mood. Lyrics tell the story of broken hearts, rich with Gary's soulful guitar pulling at the heart strings. An album that every Gary Moore blues fan is going to love, a collection of rare gems to be treasured. To be released on April 30th 2021.

SHARON QUIGLEY





## Most Played Album Top 40 – February 2021

Collated From The Playlists Of The Independent Blues Broadcasters Association Members

| Position | Artist                                       | Album                                     |
|----------|--|---|
| 1        | JOANNA CONNOR                                | 4801 SOUTH INDIANA AVENUE                 |
| 2        | CURTIS SALGADO                               | DAMAGE CONTROL                            |
| 3        | GHALIA VOLT                                  | ONE WOMAN BAND                            |
| 4        | VERONICA LEWIS                               | YOU AIN'T UNLUCKY                         |
| 5        | AMAURY FAIVRE                                | 2020                                      |
| 6        | ALLY VENABLE                                 | HEART OF FIRE                             |
| 7        | THE WILDROOTS                                | WILDROOTS SESSIONS VOL 1                  |
| 8        | WILY BO WALKER                               | TALES OF THE MESCAL CANYON TROUBADOURS    |
| 9        | THE 251s                                     | STAYING HOME                              |
| 10       | EARLY TIMES & THE HIGH ROLLERS               | THE CORNER                                |
| 11       | SELWYN BIRCHWOOD                             | LIVING IN A BURNING HOUSE                 |
| 12       | KAT DANSER                                   | ONE EYE OPEN                              |
| 13       | LIVINGSTONE BROWN, MAXI PRIEST, ROBIN TROWER | UNITED STATE OF MIND                      |
| 14       | GEORGIA VAN ETEN                             | DEEP BLACK WATER                          |
| 15       | JOYANN PARKER                                | OUT OF THE DARK                           |
| 16       | DAVE THOMAS                                  | ONE MORE MILE                             |
| 17       | TREVOR B. POWER                              | WHAT IS REAL                              |
| 18       | THE BOOGIE BOMBERS                           | BOOGIE BONANZA                            |
| 19       | ANDY GRANT BAND                              | DIG THE DARKNESS                          |
| 20       | SKYLAR ROGERS                                | FIREBREATHER                              |
| 21       | NEW MOON JELLY ROLL FREEDOM ROCKERS          | NEW MOON JELLY ROLL FREEDOM ROCKERS VOL 2 |
| 22       | JOE LEWIS BAND                               | UP NEXT                                   |
| 23       | ELLES BAILEY                                 | AIN'T NOTHING BUT                         |
| 24       | DUSTIN ARBUCKLE & MATT WOODS                 | DUSTIN ARBUCKLE & MATT WOODS              |
| 25       | JIMMY REITER                                 | JIMMY REITER LIVE                         |
| 26       | WHEN RIVERS MEET                             | WE FLY FREE                               |
| 27       | WILL JOHNS                                   | BLUESDADDY                                |
| 28       | THE BAD DAY BLUES BAND                       | TABLE BY THE WALL                         |
| 29       | KIKO & THE BLUES REFUGEES                    | THREADBARE                                |
| 30       | TINY LEGS TIM                                | CALL US WHEN IT'S OVER                    |
| 31       | THE REVEREND PEYTON'S BIG DAMN BAND          | DANCE SONGS FOR HARD TIMES                |
| 32       | JOHNNY MASTRO & MAMA'S BOYS                  | ELMORE JAMES FOR PRESIDENT                |
| 33       | CATFISH                                      | EXILE - LIVE IN LOCKDOWN                  |
| 34       | THE MOJO SLIDE                               | MANIC PANIC                               |
| 35       | ERROL LINTON                                 | NO ENTRY                                  |
| 36       | MISTY BLUES                                  | NONE MORE BLUE                            |
| 37       | SWEET BOURBON                                | BORN A REBEL                              |
| 38       | SHAUN MURPHY                                 | FLAME STILL BURNS                         |
| 39       | HÅKON HØYE & THE HONEYTONES                  | LIVE AT KITCHEN STUDIO                    |
| 40       | KING KING                                    | MAVERICK                                  |



## EARLY TIMES & THE HIGH ROLLERS

### THE CORNER

Vizztone Records

Early Times describes himself as a street poet but do not let that mislead you. He is a very good vocalist and songwriter backed by a solid full band and Popa Chubby guests on one track. He is a well-known figure performing all around New York's gritty East side, an area celebrated on the title track. An excellent contemporary blues with some outstanding lead guitar breaks courtesy of Early himself. Mary in her cha cha hat is another East side character who gets namechecked on Do What She Do. Early writes in an interest-

***“this is the record to see him gain much deserved wider recognition”***

ing urban observational style, reminding me of artists like Willie Nile and Hamill On Trial. She's About To Lose Her Mind is the track Popa Chubby guests on and is a New York urban blues, Popa's restrained soloing fitting the bill perfectly. That is followed by instrumental Rosie's Herbs N Ting, displaying Early's musicianship. He's Got A Jones and Say Man are again both cleverly written observational street life tunes. Charlamagne is slower paced, almost a love song, beautiful guitar playing. Someone Help Mary is a little more acoustic based and vocally a bit Dylan-esque, while again bringing these wonderful but damaged characters to life in our minds. Return Of The Queen is the final track and is full of NYC swagger and strut, a perfect finale for a very fine album. Early Times is an interesting character who has paid his dues, playing professionally since he was 16 and forming his first band in 1990. Hopefully, this is the record to see him gain much deserved wider recognition.

STEVE YOURGLIVCH

## JB. & THE HÜGGLI

### THANK YOU BLUES

Independent



The band formerly known as Det Hyggelige Blues Band is basically a trio of Jesper Bjarnesen on guitar and vocals, Jais K. Eriksen on bass and Oscar “Big O” Eriksen on drums. This line-up only got together in 2015 to play some club shows in Denmark but they have certainly got some history behind them. Jesper Bjarnesen has been singing and playing the blues in an assortment of bands for nigh on 35 years. Meanwhile, the rhythm section has been together for a while in Big O & The Blue Quarters. For this recording they have been augmented by tenor sax player Hanse Jensen and piano player Kim Nedergaard who, in turn, are well known in Denmark for their long tenures in the jazz blues band Kim's Bacon. Their thing is quite old fashioned as it leans heavily on the classic Chicago blues sound with some jump blues and swing thrown in for good measure. And they certainly do know how to get a sweet groove going. That is probably helped by the time Jesper Bjarnesen has spent performing

***“songs like Blues Ain't Always Sad and Blues House Party instantly feel like old friends, which is tricky thing to pull off”***

in big bands as he has a way with vocal phrasing that is really engaging. His voice has a grit to it as well and all original material is geared towards his strengths. Granted, they rarely get out of second gear but songs like Blues Ain't Always Sad and Blues House Party instantly feel like old friends, which is tricky thing to pull off.

STUART A HAMILTON

# RMR TOP 50

Roots Music Report's Blues album chart

| POS | ARTIST                             | ALBUM                                 | LABEL                     |
|-----|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1   | VERONICA LEWIS                     | YOU AIN'T UNLUCKY                     | BLUE HEART                |
| 2   | SELWYN BIRCHWOOD                   | LIVING IN A BURNING HOUSE             | ALLIGATOR                 |
| 3   | CURTIS SALGADO                     | DAMAGE CONTROL                        | ALLIGATOR                 |
| 4   | SAMANTHA MARTIN & DELTA SUGAR      | THE RECKLESS ONE                      | GYPSY SOUL                |
| 5   | JOYANN PARKER                      | OUT OF THE DARK                       | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 6   | SHEMEKIA COPELAND                  | UNCIVIL WAR                           | ALLIGATOR                 |
| 7   | ELVIN BISHOP & CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE | 100 YEARS OF BLUES                    | ALLIGATOR                 |
| 8   | KIM WILSON                         | TAKE ME BACK                          | M.C.                      |
| 9   | SKYLAR ROGERS                      | FIREBREATH                            | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 10  | JOHN NÉMETH                        | STRONGER THAN STRONG                  | NOLA BLUE                 |
| 11  | DUKE ROBILLARD                     | BLUES BASH!                           | STONY PLAIN               |
| 12  | PETER PARCEK                       | MISSISSIPPI SUITCASE                  | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 13  | SONNY GREEN                        | FOUND! ONE SOUL SINGER                | LITTLE VILLAGE FOUNDATION |
| 14  | KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD BAND          | STRAIGHT TO YOU: LIVE AT ROCKPALAST   | PROVOGUE                  |
| 15  | PETER VETESKA & BLUES TRAIN        | GRASS AIN'T GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 16  | DAVID ROTUNDO BAND                 | SO MUCH TROUBLE                       | DREAMS WE SHARE           |
| 17  | HURRICANE RUTH                     | GOOD LIFE                             | AMERICAN SHOWPLACE        |
| 18  | ALASTAIR GREENE                    | THE NEW WORLD BLUES                   | WHISKEY BAYOU             |
| 19  | KERRY KEARNEY BAND                 | TALES FROM THE PSYCHEDELTA            | HIGHLANDER                |
| 20  | THE BLUESBONES                     | LIVE ON STAGE                         | NAKED                     |
| 21  | SAVOY BROWN                        | AIN'T DONE YET                        | QUARTO VALLEY             |
| 22  | BETTE SMITH                        | THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BETTE       | RUF                       |
| 23  | JOHNNY IGUANA                      | JOHNNY IGUANA'S CHICAGO SPECTACULAR!  | DELMARK                   |
| 24  | ROBERT CRAY                        | THAT'S WHAT I HEARD                   | NOZZLE                    |
| 25  | DAVE THOMAS                        | ONE MORE MILE                         | BLONDE ON BLONDE DIRECT   |
| 26  | ROOMFUL OF BLUES                   | IN A ROOMFUL OF BLUES                 | ALLIGATOR                 |
| 27  | CHRIS SMITHER                      | MORE FROM THE LEVEE                   | SIGNATURE SOUNDS          |
| 28  | THE TESKEY BROTHERS                | RUN HOME SLOW                         | GLASSNOTE                 |
| 29  | SONNY LANDRETH                     | BLACKTOP RUN                          | PROVOGUE                  |
| 30  | THE REVEREND SHAWN AMOS            | BLUE SKY                              | PUT TOGETHER MUSIC        |
| 31  | STRATCAT WILLIE & THE STRAYS       | ON THE PROWL                          | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 32  | MISS EMILY                         | LIVE AT THE ISABEL                    | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 33  | MISTY BLUES                        | NONE MORE BLUE                        | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 34  | TREVOR B. POWER BAND               | WHAT IS REAL                          | FARM 189                  |
| 35  | EARLY TIMES & THE HIGH ROLLERS     | THE CORNER                            | VIZZTONE                  |
| 36  | GHALIA VOLT                        | ONE WOMAN BAND                        | RUF                       |
| 37  | THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY               | SLIPPIN' AND SLIDIN'                  | QUARTO VALLEY             |
| 38  | JACK DE KEYZER                     | TRIBUTE                               | BLUE STAR                 |
| 39  | KIRSTEN THIEN                      | TWO SIDES                             | SCREEN DOOR               |
| 40  | ALLY VENABLE BAND                  | HEART OF FIRE                         | RUF                       |
| 41  | TAS CRU                            | DRIVE ON                              | SUBCAT                    |
| 42  | ERIC JOHANSON                      | BELOW SEA LEVEL                       | NOLA BLUE                 |
| 43  | DAVE KELLER                        | YOU GET WHAT YOU GIVE                 | TASTEE TONE               |
| 44  | JOE LEWIS BAND                     | UP NEXT                               | SELF-RELEASE              |
| 45  | THE ALLMAN BETTS BAND              | BLESS YOUR HEART                      | BMG                       |
| 46  | BOBBY RUSH                         | RAWER THAN RAW                        | DEEP RUSH                 |
| 47  | VICTOR WAINWRIGHT                  | MEMPHIS LOUD                          | RUF                       |
| 48  | JOE BONAMASSA                      | ROYAL TEA                             | J&R ADVENTURES            |
| 49  | JW-JONES                           | SONIC DEPARTURES                      | SOLID BLUES               |
| 50  | ANDY COHEN                         | TRYIN' TO GET HOME                    | EARWIG MUSIC              |





## THE BAD DAY BLUES BAND

TABLE BY THE WALL

*Lunaria Records*

This album kicks off in an almighty way with the Stax classic, Hold On (I'm Comin'). A real beefed-up version, guitar-led, harp blowin' full-throttle way of saying hello. This is not what I was expecting at all, but wow, it certainly grabbed my attention. The title-track, Table By The Wall continues in much the same vein. This is not a rock/blues album, but more of a maximum R 'N' B album. The mix of drums, guitar, and harmonica are all balanced so well. As well as crafting these songs with gusto the band knows what they are doing. Fatman reiterates that this is by no means classic blues album in the sense of slow melancholy lyrics or wailing guitar solos. But don't let that lull you into a false sense of security. This grabs you by the throat and slams you against the wall type album. Guitars, drums, vocals, and harmonica all entwine so well at a frantic pace, whilst retaining the essence of blues within the structure of the songs. I love this album to bits. In your face, like it or lump it. The Hustler for some reason reminds me of being in Chicago a few years ago. The bustling pace of life, the sound of the 'L' trains overhead, and the blanket of blues that somehow wraps itself around you, and the draw of the multitude of blues clubs and bars that seem to be on every corner. Wandering Manis for me the stand-out track on the album. Every track makes me feel so good, but this particular one has a more traditional blues make-up. Yeah, this is one hell of a blues tune. The last couple of tracks almost seem as they are letting you calm down slowly. From being on the launch pad of a rocket traveling at super-human speed, to gently ease yourself back to normality with the guitars and harmonica soothing away your aches and pains. I've enjoyed this album immensely. On a wet and windy February afternoon Table By The Wall has injected me with pure R 'N' B.

STEPHEN HARRISON

## ERROL LINTON

NO ENTRY

*Brassdog Records*



In case you haven't come across Errol Linton before, he was discovered by John Walters, John Peel's producer. He was initially making a living as a busker on the London streets and in the Underground. He's been playing "The Brixton Blues" for nearly thirty years. The opening track No Entry Blues is a haunting harmonica-led instrumental, recalling wandering the rainswept streets on a winter's evening. The soulful harmonica is perfectly supported by the echoey organ and sparse guitar. It's a great opener to the album and would probably set the scene very nicely at a live performance. All bar two of the tracks on the album are either credited to the whole band, or Errol himself. There's a big contrast when the second track bursts out of the speakers. Fools For Love is a Chicago Blues style rocking little number, which ups the tempo. Sad And Lonesome is another bouncy blues number, where Errol's vocals have a definite hint of Billy Boy Arnold about them, as does his excellent harmonica playing. Rain In Your Life has a seventies feel to it, but that might be just the wah-wah pedal on the guitar. So Many Women races along in an unashamedly non-pc groove (Think Dion and The Wanderer). The intriguingly named Excerpt From Brixton Rush Hour Boogaloo, at just over a minute, is only slightly longer than it takes to say the title and hints at a more extended jam. Speak Easy has a ska beat, which is emphasised by the reggae style guitarwork and echoey harmonica; sounding like the Specials deciding to play the blues. Howlin' For My Darlin' is also given a Caribbean flavour and is a long way away from the Howlin' Wolf original but doesn't suffer at all for the free interpretation of this blues classic. Love You True is another jolly, bouncy reggae-inspired blues tune. Sonny Boy's much covered Got To Move gets a nice treatment in the penultimate track and Big Man's Gone wraps up the idiosyncratic album in Errol's reggae-blues style.

STEVE BANKS

## ARIS PAUL BAND

### GHOSTS



*Independent*

This is the second album from Aris Paul Band following their 2018 debut *Drive All Night*. This record focuses on Aris' friends, family and hometown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and kicks off Astray complete with an impactful rhythm section consisting of Matt Scott on bass and Aaron Wagner. The eerie tone is sublime and Paul's lead vocal has a textured quality just like Noah Hunt of the Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band. The title

***"Ghosts is proof that with thoughtful songs and talented musicians you can create a quality album without breaking the bank"***

track is a country soul number with The Souville Horns adding a classy Las Vegas vibe with Phil Brontz (saxophone), Steve Graham (trombone) and George Arner (trumpet) helping to create a three-dimensional sound. People will connect with the lyrics on *Headlights* whilst *Burn* sounds like an unreleased Deep Purple track with Aris's blistering rock guitar solo. *Win & Lose* has this lonesome guitar twang and the church organ sound from co-producer Keith Quinn provides a soft backdrop for *One More Time*. Things then wrap up with *Rust* with solos galore showcasing this outfit's first-class musicianship. To conclude, *Ghosts* is proof that with thoughtful songs and talented musicians you can create a quality album without breaking the bank.

GLENN SARGEANT

## THE MEMPHIS JUG BAND

COLLECTION 1927 - 34



*Acrobat Music*

Jug Music may not immediately jump out to the attention of blues fans as anything specifically significant, but the genre in particular, and the Memphis Jug Band in particular provided a seminal influence on artists like Lonnie Donegan, while Arlo Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and The Grateful Dead all covered their track *Stealin' Stealin'*. And remember that the summer smash hit single *In The Summer Time* from Mungo Jerry is a jug band tune. The instruments for jug band comprised of whatever was around the house, washboard, tea chest and broom handle bass, comb and paper, or a kazoo if available, and of course the ubiquitous jug which held whiskey or corn oil and was pressed into service. The style grew up in Louisville in the early nineteen hundreds, and bands were often fluid operations with musicians arriving and departing regularly. The Memphis Jug Band stood out not only for the relatively stable line-up it enjoyed, but for the superior craftsmanship of its members which led to a successful recording career, from which this compilation is collected. Having found a natural home in Beale Street, the Band brought their infectious brand of loose heady party music to the streets, and eventually into the

***"A great example of a unique style"***

studio, becoming one of the first acts to record for the fledgling Victor label. As the set unfolds, the infectiousness of the musical approach slowly makes its impact felt, it's easy to imagine how popular bands like this must have been at parties and cook-outs. Politically correct this music absolutely is not, with titles like *A Black Woman Is Like A Black Snake*, *I Can Beat You Plenty*, and *I Whipped My Woman With A Single Tree*. But this is music of its time, and modern attitudes detract from what was conceived and played as good time party music, and context is everything in culture. Just in case anyone is not sure what a jug sounds like, pay attention to *Sometimes I Think I Love You*, when the sound of air being blown over the jug aperture is front and centre. A great example of a unique style in the rich palette of the blues.

ANDY HUGHES



## CASEY JAMES

### IF YOU DON'T KNOW BY NOW

*Twosidemoon*

I find myself in uncharted territory for this review because here we have a guy called Casey James who's come to light via American Idol on the ninth season back in 2010. I'm not a great lover of these shows, for my own reasons but having looked back at Casey career so far, he's come up through the ranks and earned his stripes. By playing local hometown venues before even being on the show, quite impressive from playing in bars to 22 million via TV. So, after splitting with Sony he followed his heart to the Blues/Rock side of the street, which brings us to, IYDKBN, kicking off with the aptly named Live Life, which has a massive band sound and looking at the keynotes on the album there are ten musicians taking part on this album and gives it the depth you want in a blues/rock Americana album. Here we have fourteen quality songs that not only brings us his sublime guitar but his road grit voice, Shake Some Salt is followed by the foot tapping Girls Got Something, that would get people on any honkytonk or juke joint dance floor. If you listen to any of Casey's earlier albums it is as if you're watching him grow with your ears, the maturity is shining through now, like a beacon on a dark seashore. The fourth song on here is called Real and by now I'm hooked. The voice, the riffs, the songs, the whole package. Don't Break My Heart is followed by my favourite song on the album, Here To Please, with big voice and big horns leading the charge into the title track, which reminds me of James Hunter, another stand out track for me, Being The Best Word as well because towards the end of the song I felt like I'd boarded a soul train to the next two songs. Wish Me Luck and Be Mine, these will pull on your heart guitar strings, five more tracks follow this and can be summed up with words like rock, blues, soul, country, epic, funk to name a few, I for one will be going back to listen to Casey's other albums.

**BARRY BLUESBARN HOPWOOD**

## RICK HOLMSTROM

### SEE THAT LIGHT

*Luellie Records*



The 12 songs that make up See That Light are a testament to the talents of Rick Holmstrom, who served time playing and working with such luminaries as Mavis Staples, William Clarke, Johnny Dyer and Booker T. His singing style is lively. His guitar playing is sharp, rhythmically exciting, and tonally colourful during the solos. With a three-piece of drummer Steve Mulligan and bass player Gregory Boaz, the album serves notice of its intent from track 1. With styles ranging from the gut-bucket blues of opener Take My Hand, the light humour of Look Me In the Eye, and Losing My Shit, this is an album that makes tone and language as vital as it does the musical technique. Indeed, Losing My Shit sounds like a mix of the blues and early Counting Crows, whilst Got to Go and Lonesome Sound show a particular debt to the Rolling Stones, especially in the country blues sound of the later track. I'd Rather Be a Loser takes the pace up a bit more, adding in some jazzy ambience during the octave riffs, and Come Along is a slower song that owes

***"just three musicians doing what they do best"***

as much to Americana as it does to the blues. The Closing track Joyful Eye lives up to its title, with a stripped-down soul and Motown sound. Although the album was recorded during Lock-down, there is a little in the way of self-pity, just three musicians doing what they do best.

**BEN MACNAIR**

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## HOWLIN' WOLF

CHESS RECORDS - OUTAKES, DEMOS, ALTERNATES 1948-63

*Floating World*

What can you about the man that has not been said? I have a mass of Wolf on my shelves including the Charly box set and he surely is a man and a voice to be held in awe.

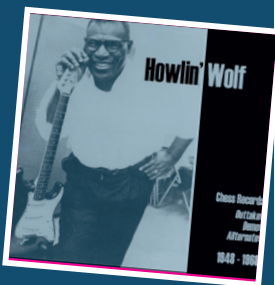
Here we have an eight-page booklet of notes (hardly read the print it is so small so got the magnifier out and still squinted).

I worked my way through the text looking for specific information on some of these songs and when, where etc they were recorded but other than a general 'they go back to the late 40's and early 50's' there is no new information to gather in. The track listing on back

***"without going through my entire collection I know there are sounds here I have not already got"***

cover does show after the song title #1, #2 etc. We have 55 tracks over two discs of the man of whom Sam Phillips said "He sang with his damn soul". To place these discs in your player is a wonder. No matter how many Wolf albums you have got this and be under his spell again... and again. There is not enough space here to comment on individual tracks but without going through my entire collection I know there are sounds here I have not already got. Just press play and sit back and be enthralled, this set has to be recommended

TOBY ORNOTT



## THE GOTHIC COWBOY (MELVIN LITTON)

BARE BONES

*Independent*

This album release is a quadruple disc set of solo material recorded by Melvin Litton otherwise known as The Gothic Cowboy between the period 1978-1984, all on a portable cassette when he was between the ages of 20-30 years. These preceded his recorded work with the Border Band where he teamed up with Roger Holden and Dave Melody and released a couple of albums. The four discs follow a theme in that each one has a sub-title namely; Chance, Folly, Desire & Dream with each disc having fourteen songs which are pastoral acoustic Folk & Country Blues, where Melvin weaves tales of love and hardship from his home in Kansas, all played and sung in an early Bob Dylan folky style. This is a very bold release for a relatively unknown artist but ultimately very commendable, as he is opening himself up to scrutiny over the four discs. The material is very similar in style with

***"This is a very bold release for a relatively unknown artist but ultimately very commendable"***

just one voice and one guitar in a stripped back style that allows him to really express himself. The fifty-six songs take a lot of listening too and after a while become somewhat monotonous as there is not sufficient variety between them although there are a couple of standouts. Padlock Rock is a tale of stealing love and has an interesting intro that sounds like it was lifted from a 1950's Rock n Roll song. It also benefits from being more upbeat unlike Mad Dog Blues which is a sad tale about taking your old dog down to the river to end its days. This is a remarkable collection of songs that do paint a picture of rural life in the farming community around Kansas and are impeccably sung and played albeit in a very down-trodden way. The artist is now approaching seventy and is rightly proud of these songs from his youth that deserve this exposure now.

ADRIAN BLACKLEE





## DAMON FOWLER

### ALAFIA MOON

*Landslide Records*

In a distinctive career including being guitarist in Dickey Betts Band, Florida's Damon Fowler brings out his eighth release. There are eleven tracks, showcasing his blues and roots influences. Equally talented playing lap steel guitar or Dobro, his guitar technique is outstanding. Here he is joined by Mike Kach on keyboards, harmonica player TC Carr and Betty Fox on vocals amongst others. *Alafia Moon* is sung by Damon in his Southern drawl, a slow meandering

***"Equally talented playing lap steel guitar or Dobro, his guitar technique is outstanding"***

mellow blues tune with resounding guitar solo and sweet harmonies. *Hip To Your Trip* is an up-tempo tune with acidic lyrics mixing with lap steel delivery. *I've Been Low* has a fiery rhythm, building to a musical crescendo. *Kicked His Ass Out* has a jump jive feel, a humorous tune, punctuated by a fine beat. *Leave It Alone* has swampy blues tones throughout with TC playing some smooth harmonica, Damon giving some sound advice lyrically. *Make The Best Of Your Time* is a highlight, guitar driven but beautiful harmonies, very catchy chorus. *Some Things Change*, is a hard driving blues tune with a subtle shuffle. *Taxman* is pure slow blues excellence for the times we live in, sublime tones. The narrative on, *The Guitar*, explains his love of playing, some country blues and amazing finger picking. *The Umbrella* is a live spoken word tale, a prelude to *Kick His Ass Out*. *Wanda* is a descriptive song about a local woman, full of swagger and nuance.

COLIN CAMPBELL

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## KING BEES

### FEATURING THE GREATEST BLUES STARS

*Wolf Records*

The King Bees are guitarist Rob Baskerville and vocalist/bass player Penny Zamagni and here they are backing a mix of various artists on live cuts from shows between 1990/2010. Jerry McCain opens the album with Got The Blues a classic slow number featuring his world-weary vocals and fine harp. McCain also contributes Noccacula Boogie a swinging harp instrumental. Chicago Bob Nelson brews up some tasty Louisiana gumbo with his swampy harp and vocals on Quit You Pretty Baby and the rollicking Goin' In

***“they always play in support of their guests and for the benefit of the songs”***

The Valley. Nappy Brown adds his fiery rough-edged vocals to Natchez Burning with Baskerville featuring strongly with tasty “Smokestack Lightning” inspired guitar licks. Nice One! Penny Zamagni is a fine singer and her powerful vocals feature on the rocking Run Your Reputation Down and Alcohol And Blues. The great thing about The King Bees is they always play in support of their guests and for the benefit of the songs. Chick Willis leads The Bees through the slow blues Hello Central featuring expressive, half spoken, vocals whilst firing out tasty guitar fills. Carey Bell’s harp work lights up What Mama Told Me and Neal Pattman sings and plays his fine country blues harmonica on the jaunty Black Rat. Beverly “Guitar” Watson excels with her gravelly vocals and hot guitar work on the lengthy Beverly’s Guitar Blues. If, like me, you’re not already familiar with all of these artists then this is a great place to catch them.

DAVE DRURY

## CATHY GRIER & THE TROUBLE- MAKERS

### I'M ALL BURN

*Independent*



Cathy Grier has released her fourteenth album I’m All Burn in which she enlisted the musical talent of her new home Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin having moved there in 2016. This sixteen-track offering opens with the title track which deals with the subject of gender equality covering issues of imagery and pay. The backing vocals on

***“sheer musical talent”***

Get Me Away by Deirdre Fellner and Liv Mueller are smooth and pleasant on the ear alongside Grier’s textured lead vocal. Then you have these Tower Of Power-esque horns courtesy of Andrew Spadafora (horn captain, saxophones), Joe Niemann (trumpet) and Mike Lizzo (trombone). The sultry Backroad Blues is a highlight with its fiery lyrics and fluid harmonica tone by Steve Cohen. I’m reminded of singer-songwriter Gretchen Peters in terms of the emotive storyteller material. Time to bring in Grier’s electric guitar on Cool Trick with its vintage Seventies production. Key To My Survival showcases her songwriting chops as it was co-written with Julia McConahay and Troy Therrien during the annual Love On Holiday (LOH) songwriting week in Wisconsin. The groovy Good Thing features a rip-roaring harmonica solo from Billy Flynn with Jimmy Voegeli adding some clavinet to the cut. The night-time sounding Roots Run Deep includes an appearance from Greg Koch with a slick guitar solo that just pours out the speakers like honey. A surprising take on the Bobbie Gentry classic Ode To Billy Joe is re-worked into a bluesy stomp that suits Grier’s voice and I respect the fact that she has put her own style on the song. In conclusion, I’m All Burn is an album with sheer musical talent and a clear understanding of song structure. A journey through a variety of styles and inspirations with something for everyone.

GLENN SARGEANT





## ERWIN HELFER AND THE CHICAGO BOOGIE ENSEMBLE

### CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

*The Sirens Records*

I just never know what the postbag will deliver when the time comes around for the next batch of review releases from Blues Matters. This month is no exception to the rule. I have never played anything by Erwin Helfer on my radio programme before however following the arrival of this, his 85th birthday celebration album, I will most certainly be doing so in the future. Surrounded by his fine ensemble of mates John Brumbach tenor sax, Skinny Williams tenor sax, Lou Marini bass and David Ilardi drums we are treated to a trip through some fine Jazz classics and three originals fronted up by Erwin's boogie woogie piano style. The whole thing works a treat. Who knows how many times Sonny Rollins Doxy has been covered let alone played and here it has the prime slot on this collection getting

### ***"The whole thing works a treat"***

things off to a fine start before Ain't Nobody's Business ambles along. The latter is so laid back as to be almost horizontal but man is it smooth. It is a fabulous cut indeed and so redolent of a smoky club somewhere. Down By The Riverside swings us gently by the hand into Gospel territory and by this time you are a firm believer in this album. Pooch Piddle (don't ask me folks!) with fine interplay between sax and keys. A melancholy St James Infirmary follows before the pace quickens again on Alexander's Rag Time Band. I wonder what Irving Berlin would have thought of this interpretation? I don't doubt his feet would be tapping. Big Joe and Day Dreaming, two originals, close out this collection. Should you want an entry level experience to boogie woogie jazz piano then look no further.

GRAEME SCOTT

## FEDERICO LUIU

### WALKIN' THE BLUES

*Independent*



Federico Luiu is an Italian now based in Canada where this debut release was recorded. Federico wrote all the material (with help on the lyrics from Joey Landreth and Justin Saladino), produced the disc and handles lead vocals and guitar, backed by a full band, including a horn section; UK expat Matt Schofield guests on one track. Federico sings with a slight accent but carries the tunes well. You Don't Love Me is a strong start with a swinging, lyrical arrangement in big band BB King mode while Funky Bee does what the title suggests as Federico gives a good

### ***"he plays some jagged slide"***

Albert Collins impression on guitar, plus there is the bonus of a solid baritone solo. Clearly a man who has worked hard on his skills, Federico's attitude is well summed up in the lyrics of All I Wanna Do, Is Play Them Blues on which he plays some jagged slide. The pace drops for What You've Done To Me, a classic slow blues with delicate guitar work wrapped in a sympathetic horn arrangement that features the trumpet on the outro. She's Gone is a swinging shuffle featuring some nice exchanges between Federico and Matt Schofield who plays a bright, extended solo. The horns are absent from the last two tracks which are short, fast-paced instrumentals: Otto has impressive picking and percolating organ which adds a jazzy dimension to the set and Like A Woman is a frenetic, country-tinged instrumental that recalls some of the late Danny Gatton's expertise; the music here would probably defeat the fleetest-footed dancer at a hoe-down! Weighing in at just shy of half an hour, this is arguably more of an EP than a full album release, but these seven tracks are high quality and give a good idea of the strengths of Federico's playing and some of his diverse guitar influences.

JOHN MITCHELL



## SEAN TAYLOR LOCKDOWN

*Independent*

Sean Taylor has taken the pandemic head-on across this post-modern politically charged manifesto of spoken word songs set to a slinky blues soundscape. Recorded at home during the current lockdown, Taylor's personal political polemics contrast starkly with the laid-back blues mood-music. In doing so, a tension of extremes is created which will certainly appeal to his converted fans. It's a campaigning album where Taylor makes a call out to movements for justice, especially on the March On, Black Lives Matter, and Palestine tracks. Taylor's guitar, piano and harmonica playing cooks up a relaxed

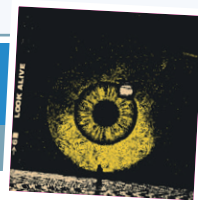
***"a fully committed and intellectually passionate recording"***

musical order with Mark Hallman's drums, bass, and Hammond Organ playing. Blowing in, Joe Morales' saxophone adds a ripple of light jazzy motifs accentuating the bluesy tropes. The effect is a twilit soundtrack feel that hangs loosely around these quixotic songs. No shrinking violet, Taylor takes direct aim at big global targets and perceived nefarious forces that lurk and lie in the dark corners and boardrooms of pan-global megalithic business interests. He also fires his ire at politicians and commentators, in particular, Boris Johnson and Piers Morgan. The crucial element that at times undermines the 48 minutes and 42 seconds of atmospheric bluesy soundscapes is the politically charged narrative spoken and not sung over it. Needless to say, the incessant barrage of non-mainstream political dialogue won't be to some people's taste. Nevertheless, it's a brave recording that will satisfy his audience, yet most likely have a marginal effect on bringing a mass of people together as music as entertainment should. His is a fully committed and intellectually passionate recording of no small courage reflecting a close to the bone kind of personal lockdown blues.

PAUL DAVIES

## BLACK PISTOL FIRE LOOK ALIVE

*Black Hill Records*



Based in Austin, Texas, Black Pistol Fire are a duo of vocalist and guitarist Kevin McKeown with Eric Owen on drums and bass synthesiser. Their musical styles incorporate all forms of influences with a new generation blues fusion twist. They have an explosive sound and on this new release this has been enhanced by co-producer Jacob Sciba who has worked with Gary Clark Junior, Govt Mule and Warren Haynes. Opener, Look Alive, sets the tone and grabs the listener with full on power, tones of The Black Keys, very ethereal. Pick Your Poison is anthemic with catchy drumming and visceral lyrics, the guitar playing matches the synth tones. Holdin' Up keeps a stomping groove throughout and has such a catchy vibe. Never Enough, has a funky tone to it and more catchy lyrics. Wildfire brings the tempo down but still sung with passion and fury. Hope In Hell is a highlight, a slow burner with a

***"Beyond The Blue closes this quite unique and highly polished release"***

bluesy riff, good harmonies, a real crowd pleaser. Black Halo, has screaming guitar opening riff mixing with dark lyrics and deeper synthesiser tones, showing a real chemistry between the two musicians. Temper Temper, has rhythm and blues tones imprinted throughout, guitar work is outstanding. Level, has so many layers to the song, just never tire of playing it, almost chunky psychedelic blues sound. Always On My Mind has a hypnotic bass line then the pace quickens, a musical soundscape. Beyond The Blue closes this quite unique and highly polished release.

COLIN CAMPBELL



## KAT DANSER

### ONE EYE OPEN

*Black Hen Music*

Canadian Kat Danser has made records before with Steve Dawson, but the pandemic of 2020 made the usual arrangements impossible, so recording took place across North America, Kat at home in Edmonton, Steve producing from his studio in Nashville where he laid down the guitar parts with the rhythm section; the horns were recorded in Vancouver. However, you would not guess that the musicians were never together when recording. Kat wrote eight of the ten songs featured, covering a gamut of styles from New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta to country ballads, rockabilly, and punk. The first five tracks all feature strong horn arrangements: Kat expresses her personal philosophy on *Way I Like It Done*, a full big band, swinging arrangement behind her, then sounding in thrall to another on the slower-paced *Lonely & The Dragon*. *Bring It With You When You Come*, a 1920's song by Gus Cannon, is given a superb makeover with the horns really authentic and pianist Kevin McKendree sounding like he is in a speakeasy. Kat's New Orleans tribute *Frenchman Street Shake* is propelled by Steve's greasy slide, blasts of horns and terrific second line rhythms, not an easy song to stay still to (and why would you?). The lyrics describe the hedonistic atmosphere of the Crescent City and this one is the pick of the album. The second cover *Get Right*, Church is credited to Jesse Mae Hemphill though its origins go right back to the religious music of the Deep South and the arrangement here takes the song back to the Delta. The second half of the album is very different, starting with the title track, a punk-inspired tune with raucous vocals. *Trainwreck* brings a touch of rockabilly on a tune that recalls *Mystery Train* before two straight country tunes and *Mi Corazon*, a Cuban-inspired love ballad, sung in Spanish. Overall, a very mixed bag, described by I-Tunes as "Country & Folk"! The first five songs are well worth hearing but this reviewer could happily pass on the second half of the CD.

JOHN MITCHELL



## KAI STRAUSS

### IN MY PRIME

*Continental Blue Heaven*

Opener, *Going To London* features a horn section which was built around US saxophone virtuoso Sax Gordon and whilst it has a rich full sound it is more Las Vegas than London. The drum intro from Alex Lex on the title track sets the scene for this swinging tune that would not be out of place in a late night jazz club atmosphere. *Keep Your Happy Home* includes Christian Rannenberg on piano which blends well with the poignant lyrics. *Down On Bended Knee* concerns a man begging a female who has left him to come back as he has realised that all he has is sleepless nights. *World Crisis Blues* is of course inspired by the global pandemic as Strauss's voice has this textured tone especially on the relatable *A Day Late* and *A Dollar Short* with a solid bassline courtesy of Kevin Duvernay. Closing track *Wait A Minute Baby* is a slow blues complete with Thomas Feldmann on harmonica and proves that Kai Strauss really embraces the

***"Kai Strauss really embraces the blues completely"***

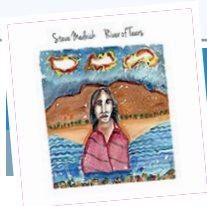
blues completely! In conclusion, *In My Prime* is well-executed with highly skilled musicians but seems to lack uniqueness and does not seem to be different enough from what his contemporaries are doing.

GLENN SARGEANT

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## STEVE MEDNICK

### RIVER OF TEARS

Prospect Hill Music

Right from the first track *River Of Tears*, I know this is not going to be an album for me.. It's got a country blues feel that's not my bag. Well, that's what I thought but as I listen it's growing on me and I think it's the simplicity of it that I like. Mostly all thirteen songs are just guitar, drums and bass, with the occasional keys throw in. All jogging together nicely on this footpath of enlightenment, with song titles such as *The End Of The Story*, *I Should Of Seen It Coming*, *Fork In The Road* and *Yearning For Silent Places*. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to work out

***"I really feel for Steve, I feel like I've been a shoulder for him to cry on, which means his songs have got to me"***

that Steve is writing from the heart and it sounds like he's been to some lonely valleys in dungeons of despair. I get the feeling this could be about a marriage breakdown album. *Fork In The Road* strikes a chord in any man's heart. You'd be a liar if you said you never thought about what if you had taken another direction in life, I've done it, we've all done it. Maybe why it's my favourite track on the album, followed by the more upbeat *Looking For You*, where I get an idea of hope coming back into his life, until you get to *The Searcher* where you hear lyrics such as, he was marching toward all the carnage, he was running out of time, I'm starting to think there's not going to be a happy ending to this story and as *Yearning For The Silent Places* is the last track, I'm guessing I'm right. As the album draws to a close, I really feel for Steve, I feel like I've been a shoulder for him to cry on, which means his songs have got to me. Well isn't that what it's about?

BARRY BLUESBARN HOPWOOD

## FLESH & BLOOD

### BLUES FOR DAZE

Bad Reputation



Blues is so central to all subsequent genres of popular music that some of its DNA can even be found in glam rock. Do not believe me? Listen to the occasional forays into 12-bar territory by the likes of *Hanoi Rocks* and *Guns N' Roses*. Purists in either camp would disapprove, of course, but when it does work, it works surprisingly well. And that observation brings us to *Blues For Daze*, originally recorded in 1994 as a side project by alumni of various hair metal outfits I will confess to never having heard of, but which a cursory google search suggests being entirely respectable. This is blues in the sense of the bands we used to describe as 'blues-rock' in Britain in the 1970s rather than what the term designated in the Depression-era Deep South. The hair is long, and the amps are overdriven, except on the obligatory acoustic ballads, of course. Vocalist Danny Vaughn has the tonsils to handle both the

***"this CD might be just the job for those moments when you do not fancy listening to your Chess re-issue box sets for the millionth time"***

rockers, notably the title track, plus *Sweet Sister Rose* and *Judgment Day*, and the slowies. Al Pitrelli turns in some nifty guitar work, knowing when to let the power chords ring and when to show off a bit. Loud and not a little camp, this CD might be just the job for those moments when you do not fancy listening to your Chess re-issue box sets for the millionth time. Just go easy on the eyeliner.

DAVID OSLER



**LAURA GREEN**

**GREEN EYED BLUES**

*Independent*

Laura Green's debut album was recorded in St Louis with a slew of local musicians, the name most familiar to UK audiences being Rob Lee who was the drummer in Mike Zito's former band, The Wheel. Laura wrote all the songs here which are mainly about love and relationships, though the musical styles are quite varied. Opener Bone To Pick has an easy, country-tinged feel while Pretty Little Thing goes further down the country road with slide over a rockabilly beat; Baby No More is a good

***"Laura has a good voice and resists the temptation to scream"***

slice of rock and roll and there is a Bo Diddley rhythm at the heart of That's Right. Cry chugs along in blues-rock mode and A Reason To Sing The Blues adds some rather histrionic wah-wah but it is probably All The King's Men that comes closest to straight blues with rolling piano and slide, bringing Bonnie Raitt to mind. It Ain't Easy develops from a slow start to build up a head of gospel steam and Don't Know Why also has a touch of gospel, as well as providing an opportunity for guitar player Aaron Griffin to stretch out but is rather repetitive. Repetition is an issue that definitely dogs Still In Love in which Laura repeats "you" nine times on each chorus! One song is credited to Laura and her co-producer David Torretta and it is a departure, an acoustic piece entitled Mama Don't Cry, with lyrics that try to encourage the lady to take back control of her life after the break-up of a relationship. Laura has a good voice and resists the temptation to scream, as so many vocalists do, a definite plus point! Since recording this album she has relocated to Phoenix and a follow-up release is planned.

**JOHN MITCHELL**

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## TREVOR B POWER

### WHAT IS REAL?

*Blind Racoon*

The singer-songwriter, guitarist and harmonica player Trevor B Power has turned in a rafter-shaking collection with *What Is Real?* The ten tracks span the genres, from Rolling Stones like grooves, softer slide guitar accompanied reveries, with elements of funk, gospel, blues, rock, and Americana thrown into an already heady sonic stew. Much of the heavy lifting, musically done by Anthony Krizan, who shares guitar duties, and drums, bass, and vocals. Several other singers, notably Danielle Illario adds to the colourful harmony singing. World

***“Trevor B Power has turned in a rafter-shaking collection with *What Is Real?*”***

Gone Mad starts proceedings with piano and vocal percussion, adding to the story told by Trevor B Power during the main body of the song. Get Well Johnny is a wailing harmonica song with some slight funk rhythms. Pandemic 2020 sits in the same rock and Americana ballpark that Bruce Springsteen has made his own, whilst the love ballad I'M Still In makes excellent use of harmony vocals and mandolin. The pace picks up again during the raucous blues of Easier Way, with its unison slide guitar and harmonica, and Life is Good is a slower blues with plenty of lively keyboards. I'm A Fool is an achingly slow country blues song, with deep Johnny Cash like vocals and album closer This Old Road is an acoustic ballad, with some lively playing and a storyline in the aching melancholy of the vocal. Although the album skips between many disparate musical genres, there is much to enjoy for fans of blues, rock, and Americana.

**BEN MACNAIR**



## THE BLUES BONES

### LIVE ON STAGE

*Naked*

Winners of the Belgian Blues Challenge in 2016 and second place in the European Blues Challenge the following year, The Blues Bones are a five piece that certainly kicks blues-rock ass, but these guys can also ease down and play the blues pure and simple, take a listen to, for example, The Witchdoctor for a very fine modern blues. This album was recorded towards the end of 2019 following on from the success of 2018's *Chasing Shadows*, and of course, like many other projects from that time, the pandemic delayed its release and there was no chance of touring in its wake. The band eventually decided to release it anyway, and we can be glad of that. It sounds like an excellent gig. We might be missing the crowd jostling and the smell of beer, but we do certainly have the music; original, in your face blues-rock, with singer Nico De Cock strutting the stage in accordance with his name (OK, you can't see

***“It sounds like an excellent gig”***

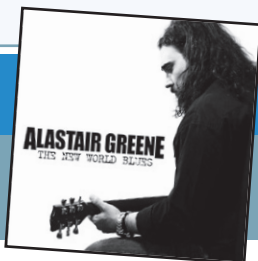
him but you just know that's what he's doing), guitarist Stef Paglia blasting out crunching riffs and taking searing solos, and Edwin Risbourg on blues harp and keyboards, filling out the sound and adding different textures. Underneath it all, bassist Geert Boeckx and drummer Jens Roeland power proceedings along. Yes, it is impressive! From the riff-ridden opener, Find My Way Out, and the funky blues-rock of 'The End' to the eleven minutes plus of the whisper to a scream (and back again) powerhouse slow grind of the closer Whiskey Drinking Woman, this excellent set offers the listener blues-rock of the highest order. Is it recommended then? Do you really need to ask?

**NORMAN DARWEN**



## ALASTAIR GREENE

### THE NEW WORLD BLUES



#### *Whiskey Bayou Records*

Nine of the eleven tracks on this album are written by Greene himself, with the other two co-written with Tab Benoit who joins the band as musician and producer. Living Today opens the album with a thundering drum beat and a heavy dose of the blues to accompany it. Raspy bluesy guitar from Greene culminating in a wonderful guitar solo. Bayou Mile starts with a much softer edge. But, after the first two hard-edged blues tune it leaves you with the notion that it will explode and carry on in the same vein. Well, it doesn't! It trundles along quietly and melodically, all the while keeping you on your toes. No Longer Around is straight-up dirty blues right out of the delta. Earthy, with the bite of a rattlesnake, this is just bliss. Greene gives his all on vocals and guitar, which seem like they are being dragged from his very soul. As a change of pace, Back At The Poor Hose is a lovely bluesy instrumental. It fits nicely onto the album while not detracting anything from the blues that have gone previously. I should not be surprised at anything that this album throws up, but sometimes you forget that this is a three-piece band. Tab Benoit and Corey Duplechin provide excellent back up to Greene both musically and in the harmonies that are so good on the album. Heroes is a slow ballad showing yet another side to this band. Surprisingly, it does not seem out of place on the album. This is a proper blues album in every respect, but the ballad can hold its own. Alone And Confused takes you right back to the down and dirty blues world. One hell of a blues tune that grabs you hard almost squeezing the life out of you, leaving you breathless but satisfied. The New World Blues being the title track finishes this fine album in some style. If this is new world blues, then we will all be better for it. I for one cannot wait for the next instalment.

STEPHEN HARRISON

## IVY GOLD

### SIX DUSTY WINDS

#### *Ivy Gold Records*

So place in disc tray and press play. Nice tone to the organ to the opener, Believe. Gruff vocal, chunky chords and rockin' solo while the organ weaves the neat backdrop. I am reminded of something from some years ago but cannot put my finger on it yet. Swedish keyboard titan, Anders Olinder provides smooth, moody sounds while the lady named Manou provides the voice and she can mix it up and be moody, raging or thoughtful (reminding me sometimes of Toyah).

Tal Bergman sits at the skins and appeared on a Rod Stewart American Songbook album. Kevin Moore



### "Keep an ear out for Ivy Gold"

takes care of the bass and has played with some A-listers including Titus Turner. Sebastian Eder holds the frets and plays with style, some nice solos and rhythms that have great hooks.

The participants have all come from diverse musical backgrounds you can tell and they seem to be blending up a storm here on this interesting piece of work. Describing themselves as 'contemporary blues-rock' wanting to stay independent and free to work their style to the world. This then is their first full on release and certainly is an interesting one comprising ten tracks that vary a lot.

Face Of Deceit strides in full on but takes a step back to set the tone before it saddles up. I enjoyed Shine On as an 'easier' song. The members harmonise well throughout. This Is My Time has funky intro and keeps a 'stepping' flow.

The album closes on Without You that slows it down to ease you out, tuneful and gentle guitar oozes over keys and easy rhythm backing. A nice end to this first release. Keep an ear out for Ivy Gold.

TOBY ORNOTT



## WILY BO WALKER

### TALES FROM THE MESCAL CANYON TROUBADOURS

*Mescal Canyon Records*

Drive (Mescalito Mix) is the first track on the album and what an opening track it is. Raw earthy vocals as we are accustomed to hearing from Wily Bo Walker certainly don't disappoint. It's like getting re-acquainted with an old book. You know it is going to be just as good as the first time around. Walk In Chinese Footsteps reminds me of the tune by Warren Zevon, But, only in the title. This an altogether different kettle of fish. The sheer power of the vocals and the brilliant playing of the band sets this far apart from the Zeavon tune. It has a ferocity to it without being too over the top. Joined by Danny Flam and E. D. Brayshaw again, Walker continues to grow a certain mystique to all of his songs. Having

***"It's just a wonderful album"***

been together for a while these guy's certainly gel so well. As I listen to each of these tunes I'm of a mind that they could be turned into a short film. There is something very theatrical about them in a weird but wonderful way. Dark foreboding lighting with eerie overtones gives it an almost gothic blues mantra. Velvet Windows is simply magnificent. Country blues with some folk and blues thrown in for good measure is simple but oh so effective. It still has the effect of being theatrical but with a slightly softer tone than some of the other tunes. The diversity and boundary-stretching leave you eager for the next installment. Chettahoochee Coochee Man (Southern Slide) leaves little to the imagination as to where this song is going to take you. Brilliant slide guitar wrapped up in uplifting lyrics. Brilliant. Time To Forget You ( Bourbon & Candlelight Mix) is a pure blues classic. Down and dirty lyrics delivered with down and dirty vocals help to make this the outstanding tune on what is a fantastic album. This album combines musical theatre and gothic blues in equal measure. It's just a wonderful album.

STEPHEN HARRISON

## BAD TEMPER JOE

### ONE CAN WRECK IT ALL



*Timezone Records*

I fondly remember Bad Temper Joe from his The Maddest Of Them All release a couple of years back. It was a cracker even though, as a double album, it could have done with some editing. So, I was pleased to see that this was a lean and mean single CD. And it is really, good. It is hard to believe that the sounds of the Mississippi Delta have relocated to Germany, but they have. As well as singing and writing Mr. Bad Temper also plays the piano, resonator guitar, stomps his feet and plays kettledrum. He's got a few special guests in to help him out, but a special mention has to go to Washboard Wolf who plays, um, the washboard, as well as some extra percussion. He is singing songs

***"put your thoughts of authenticity to one side and just let the music wrap itself around you then you are in for a mighty fine time"***

about bootleggers, mules, Lightnin' Hopkins, and The Night Johnny Cash Quit Doing Pills (which also references Janis Joplin) and if you put your thoughts of authenticity to one side and just let the music wrap itself around you then you are in for a mighty fine time. There are fast blues, boogies, slow blues and even some ragtime but wherever he lands it's a winner. Wishing Well, which sees a broken man pleading to Lightnin' Hopkins for one last song, is a particular standout but this is just a great record from top to bottom.

STUART A HAMILTON

## THE BLUES QUEEN

BY ERJA LYYTINEN  
& MAPE OLLILA

*Book review by Adam Kennedy*

Over the years award-winning, slide guitar supremo Erja Lyytinen has firmly established herself as a household name in her native Finland, as well as becoming a prominent figure on the international blues scene.

Before the pandemic, Lyytinen graced the stage with guitar hero Carlos Santana, and during the same year, she also performed in front of 85,000 people in Helsinki's central market square. But how did she arrive at this high point in her career? The answer is of course contained in the artist's debut autobiographical book 'The Blues Queen', which is now available for the first time in English.

As most musicians will tell you, success doesn't come easily, very few people make it overnight. This sentiment is reiterated by rock legends AC/DC who sung those immortal lines: 'It's a long way to the top if you wanna rock and roll'.

Erja's life in music along with her rise to the top is perfectly depicted throughout 'The Blues Queen'. Beginning with Lyytinen's musical family upbringing through to her studies both at home and abroad. The book continues by depicting the start of Erja's domestic career and international breakthrough before bringing the reader right up to date with the release of her critically acclaimed latest studio album 'Another World'. And for the guitar aficionados, there is also a detailed rundown of Erja's guitar rig.

Subsequently, 'The Blues Queen' also portrays the more personal, off-stage side of the artist that her fans don't usually see. Besides being a professional touring musician Erja Lyytinen balances the role of being both a mother and an entrepreneur. Throughout the book, Lyytinen

shares emotional tales of both love and heartbreak, along with candid stories from life on the road. There is no stone left unturned.

The autobiography is beautifully illustrated with images from throughout the artist's illustrious career along with rare stills from her family photo albums. But this should not distract from her words and how Erja's enthusiasm, love and passion for music leap off the page when describing moments such as performing on stage or the build-up to a show.

Without sharing too many spoilers – we recommend that you read the book itself. This majestic hardback autobiographical book is certainly fit for 'The Queen of the Slide Guitar' and her blues-loving subjects.

'The Blues Queen' by Erja Lyytinen and Mape Ollila is available now in both English and Finnish, to purchase a copy please visit [erjalyytinen.com](http://erjalyytinen.com)





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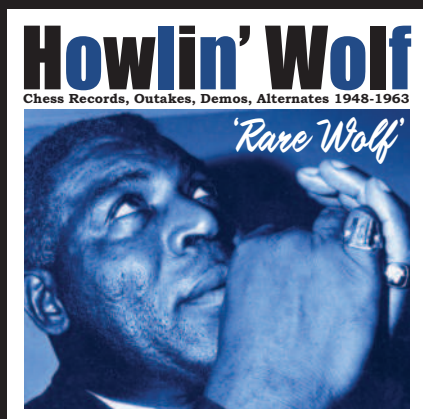
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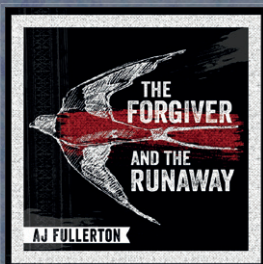
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