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BITS

BLUES IN THE SOUTH

APRIL 2024

Issue #444

INTERVIEW WITH ELLES
BAILEY

LAWRENCE LEBO'S
COLUMN - JON
WALMSLEY

INTERVIEW WITH SOPHIE
LORD

BLUE HORIZON BY JOHN
HOLMES

CD REVIEWS

VIDEOS

GIG GUIDE

Elles Bailey



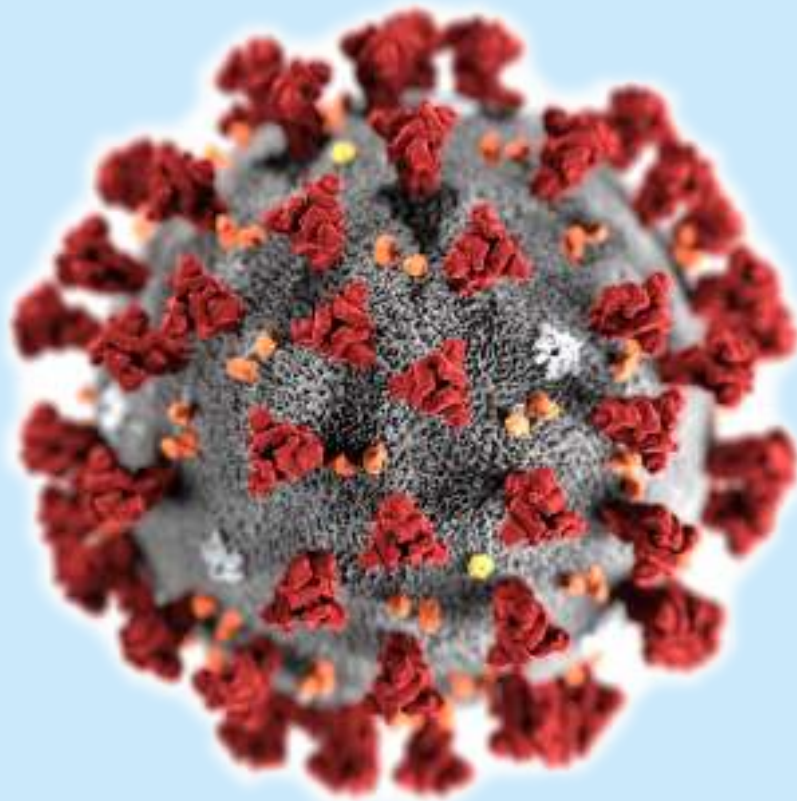
Photo Credit: Rob Blackham

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ET AGAIN, WE HAVE A GROWING NUMBER OF GIGS IN THIS EDITION FOR YOU. ALTHOUGH MANY HAVE BEEN CANCELLED OR POSTPONED, IT APPEARS THAT THINGS ARE SLOWLY RETURNING TO NORMAL. BITS WILL CONTINUE CAREFULLY TO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND WE FULLY EXPECT MORE AND MORE GIGS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

IN THE MEAN TIME, DON'T GO TO GIGS IF YOU ARE NOT ABSOLUTELY SURE THEY ARE COMPLETELY SAFE, MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE AND REMEMBER:

IT AIN'T GORN YET!!



The CORONA VIRUS DOES NOT CIRCULATE
PEOPLE CIRCULATE IT

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

- 02/04 VINCE LEE & AL WALLIS @ The Blues Bar & Grill, Plymouth, 9:00pm.
- 03/04 REV FERRIDAY @ The Mesmerist, Brighton, 9:00pm.
- 04/04 DIZ WATSON & RUSSELL SINCLAIR BAND @ Teign Jazz & Blues Club, Teignmouth Yacht Club, 7:30pm.
- 04/04 MALONE SIBUN BAND @ Bullfrog Blues Club, Southsea, 8:00pm.
- 05/04 BAD INFLUENCE duo @ The Ship Inn, Lyme Regis
- 05/04 BRAVE RIVAL (supporting FM) @ Concorde 2, Brighton, 7:30pm.
- 05/04 CHICAGO 9 @ Community Centre, Wickham, 8:00pm.
- 05/04 BITTER BLUES @ The Foresters Arms, Andover, 9:45pm.
- 05/04 BEN POOLE BAND @ Long Street Blues Club, Devizes, 7:45pm.
- 05/04 HOT TAMALES @ The Neptune Inn, Hove, 9:00pm.
- 06/04 BEN POOLE BAND @ The David Hall, South Petherton, 8:00pm.
- 06/04 THE JEFFERSON ARCHIVE @ The Lucombe Oak, Exeter, 9:00pm.
- 06/04 BA TREMAIN solo @ The West Town Inn, Hayling Island, 8:00pm.
- 06/04 THE STRANGE BLUES BAND @ The Wheatsheaf, New Milton, 8:30pm.
- 06/04 THOMAS HEPPELL solo @ The Gate Craft Bar, Southampton, 7:00pm.
- 06/04 DR FEELGOOD @ Chalk, Brighton, 7:00pm.
- 06/04 MARK HARRISON @ Graylingwell Chapel, Chichester, 7:00pm.
- 06/04 CHICAGO 9 @ Platform Tavern, Southampton, 9:00pm.
- 06/04 KRIS BARRAS BAND @ The Foundry, Torquay, 7:00pm.
- 06/04 JAMIE WILLIAMS AND THE ROOTS COLLECTIVE @ The Southgate Inn, Devizes, 8:00pm.
- 06/04 THE RELICS @ The Cavalier Inn, Great Torrington, 9:00pm.
- 06/04 DAMO AND THE DOMINOS @ The Brunswick, Brighton, 7:30pm.
- 06/04 THE WHISKY CHASERS @ Avon Social Club, Bournemouth, 9:00pm.
- 06/04 THE MIGHTY HOWLERS @ Crooklets Beach Cafe, Bude, 3:00pm.
- 07/04 HOT TAMALES @ The Southwick Beer Engine, Brighton, 3:00pm.
- 07/04 SMOKESTACK duo @ The Railway Inn, Billingshurst, 2:00pm.
- 07/04 THE BLOCKHEADS + DR FEELGOOD @ Portsmouth Guildhall, 7:00pm.
- 07/04 BLUES JAM @ The Auckland Arms, Southsea, 12:00pm.
- 07/04 THE JACKALS @ Hove & Kingsway Bowls Club, Hove, 4:00pm.
- 09/04 SYKICK SURFERS @ The George Inn, Cosham, 8:30pm.
- 09/04 ERJA LYYTINEN @ The 1865, Southampton, 7:00pm.
- 09/04 VINCE LEE & AL WALLIS @ The Blues Bar & Grill, Plymouth, 9:00pm.
- 09/04 Brixham Blues Second Tuesday BBT2 @ The Birdcage, New Road, Brixham, TQ5 8LT.
- <https://www.facebook.com/BrixhamBlues/>, 8:00pm.

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10/04 TOM KILLNER BAND @ Strings Bar and Venue, Newport IOW, 7:30pm.
10/04 Pete & Phil's Blues Jam @ The Bell & Crown, Salisbury, SP1 2DH, 8:00pm.
11/04 VINCE LEE & SOPHIE LORD @ The Lord High Admiral, Plymouth, 7:30pm.
11/04 DOM MARTIN solo @ Plough Arts Centre, Great Torrington, 7:30pm.
11/04 ZOE SCHWARZ & ROB KORAL @ The Way Outback Brewing Co, Bournemouth, 7:00pm.
11/04 OTIS JAY BLUES BAND @ Forest Arts Centre New Milton BH25 6DS (Otis Jay supported by State of Undress and World Gone Wrong), 7:30pm.
12/04 BENNY GUITAR CARR @ The Bootlegger, Exeter, 9:00pm.
12/04 VINCE LEE & THE BIG COMBO @ The Burton, Brixham, 9:00pm.
12/04 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Lord Raglan, Emsworth, 8:30pm.
12/04 NASTY HABITS @ The Mermaid, Sherborne, 7:00pm.
12/04 AMBA TREMAIN solo @ Bar Aroma, Portsmouth, 7:30pm.
12/04 THOMAS HEPPELL solo @ Farnham Pottery, Wrecclesham, 7:00pm.
12/04 THE INFORMERS duo @ The Bootlegger, Brighton, 9:00pm.
12/04 BIG WOLF BAND @ Arlington Arts Centre, Newbury, 7:00pm.
12/04 LUKE PHILBRICK & THE SOLID GONE SKIFFLE INVASION @ The Apple & Parrot, Torquay, 9:00pm.
12/04 KRIS BARRAS BAND @ The Engine Rooms, Southampton, 7:00pm.
12/04 ANDY GRANT solo @ Poole Lighthouse, 8:00pm.
12/04 THE ZAC SCHULZE GANG @ Emsworth Sports & Social Club, 7:30pm.
12/04 DAN PATLANSKY @ The Arch, Brighton, 6:00pm.
12/04 THEM BONES @ The Blues Bar, Plymouth, 10:00pm.
12/04 THE MIGHTY HOWLERS @ The Devon & Cornwall Inn, Millbrook, 9:00pm.
13/04 THE MANFREDS @ Plough Arts Centre, Great Torrington, 8:00pm.
13/04 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Brewery Tap, Portsmouth, 9:00pm.
13/04 DOM MARTIN solo @ Brighthelm Centre, Brighton, 7:00pm.
13/04 CHICAGO 9 @ The Dolphin, St Denys, 9:00pm.
13/04 CLAY BOTTOM JUG BUSTERS @ Caryford Community Hall, Castle Cary, 7:00pm.
13/04 JAKE LEG JUG BAND @ Calstock Arts, Calstock, 7:00pm.
13/04 PETE HARRIS TRIO @ The Steam Town Brew Co, Eastleigh, 8:00pm.
13/04 BRENT HUTCHINSON BAND @ Basingstoke Blues Club, Railway Social Club, Basingstoke, 8:00pm.
14/04 THE WORRIED MEN @ The Bird In Hand, Fareham, 5:00pm.
14/04 THE INFORMERS duo @ The Steam Packet, Littlehampton, 4:30pm.
14/04 ANDY GRANT solo @ The Royal Portland Arms, Portland, 5:00pm.
14/04 ZOE SCHWARZ TRIO @ The Captain's Club, Christchurch, 12:00pm.
14/04 ABB @ Poole Hill Brewery, Bournemouth, 9:00pm.

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16/04 CHICAGO 9 @ The George Inn, Cosham, 8:30pm.
16/04 DAN PATLANSKY @ The1865, Southampton, 7:00pm.
17/04 OLI BROWN AND THE DEAD COLLECTIVE @ The 1865, Southampton, 7:00pm.
18/04 CONNOR SELBY BAND @ Teign Jazz & Blues Club, Teignmouth Yacht Club, 7:30pm.
19/04 JIM HAMMOND @ The Plough, Farnham, 8:30pm..
19/04 BENNY GUITAR CARR @ The Woodland Cafe, Newton Abbot, 7:30pm.
19/04 THE JEFFERSON ARCHIVE @ The Coach House, Paignton, 9:00pm.
19/04 THE SPIKEDRIVERS @ Crookham Memorial Hall, Church Crookham, 8:15pm.
20/04 THE INFORMERS @ The Railway Inn, Billingshurst, 9:00pm.
20/04 THE RELICS @ GWRSA, Exmouth, 9:00pm.
20/04 THE SPIKEDRIVERS @ Chetnole Village Hall, 7:30pm.
20/04 THE MIGHTY HOWLERS @ RATTLER FEST 2024, 1:45pm.
20/04 ABB @ The Village Club, Kingsclere, 8:00pm.
21/04 PETE ROBSON @ The Four Horsemen, Bournemouth, 8:00pm.
22/04 THE JACKALS @ The Neptune Inn, Hove, 8:30pm.
22/04 ZOE SCHWARZ BLUEZ PARTY @ Inn In The Park, Poole, 8:00pm.
25/04 BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE @ The West End Centre, Aldershot, 7:00pm.
26/04 THE MANFREDS @ Concorde Club, Eastleigh, 9:00pm.
26/04 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Golden Lion, Fareham, 9:00pm.
26/04 PETE G & THE MAGNITONES @ The Plough, Farnham, 8:30pm.
26/04 HOT TAMALES @ The Eagle, Arundel, 9:00pm.
26/04 BILLY BOY MISKIMMIN'S MERCY LOUNGE @ The Royal Portland Arms, Portland, 9:00pm.
26/04 JUNCO SHAKERS @ The Steam Town Brew Co, Eastleigh, 8:00pm.
26/04 THE CATFISH KINGS @ The Bootlegger, Brighton, 9:00pm.
26/04 BEAUX GRIS GRIS AND THE APOCALYPSE @ Forest Arts Centre, New Milton, 7:30pm.
26/04 TOM DAVIES AND THE BLUEBIRDS @ Crookham Memorial Hall, Church Crookham, 8:15pm.
27/04 OTIS JAY BLUES BAND @ Back of Beyond Glamping Site Bournemouth BH24 2SB
27/04 BARRELHOUSE @ The Southgate Inn, Devizes, 9:00pm.
27/04 THE INFORMERS @ The Stanley Arms, Brighton, 8:50pm.
27/04 THE JEFFERSON ARCHIVE @ The Queen's Arms, Brixham, 8:30pm.
27/04 VOODOO ROOM @ The Venue, Worthing, 7:30pm.
27/04 BROOKS WILLIAMS & AARON CATLOW @ Village Hall, King's Somborne, 7:30pm.
27/04 CHICAGO 9 @ Fareham Social Club, 8:00pm.
27/04 WHEN RIVERS MEET @ The Brook, Southampton, 7:30pm.
27/04 THE JACKALS @ The Neptune Inn, Hove, 9:00pm.

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Most Played Album Top 40 – February 2024

Collated from the playlists of the Independent Blues Broadcasters Association members

Position	Artist	Album
1	THE CINELLI BROTHERS	ALMOST EXACTLY...
2	TINSLEY ELLIS	NAKED TRUTH
3	JJ GREY & MOFRO	OLUSTEE
4	EVA CARBONI	IN THE NAME OF THE BLUES (E.P)
5	DANIELLE NICOLE	THE LOVE YOU BLEED
6	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	DO RIGHT, SAY RIGHT
7	KATIE HENRY	GET GOIN'
8	ALICE DI MICELE	INTERPRETATIONS VOL. 1
9	DAVE KELLY	SUN ON MY FACE
10	CHRIS WRAGG & GREG COPELAND	THE LAST SUNDOWN
11	KEVIN BURT	THANK YOU BROTHER BILL: A TRIBUTE TO BILL WITHERS
12	JACK J HUTCHINSON	BATTLES
13	BERNARD ALLISON	LUTHER'S BLUES
14	HILLBILLY VEGAS	THE GREAT SOUTHERN HUSTLE
15	CHRIS O'LEARY	THE HARD LINE
16	B'EE	WHAT'S IT GONNA B'EE
17	BRAD 'GUITAR' WILSON	BUCKLE UP!
18	SETH JAMES	LESSONS
19	MITCH RYDER	THE ROOF IS ON FIRE
20	GEMINI DRAGON	3
21	BEX MARSHALL	FORTUNA
22	EMMA WILSON	MEMPHIS CALLING
23	ALEX VOYSEY	AV3
24	ADAM SWEET BAND	LIVE AT CRESCENT RECORDS (E.P.)
25	SUE FOLEY	ONE GUITAR WOMAN
26	RED RED	THE ALABAMA KID
27	FOG BLUES & BRASS BAND	TWELVE BAR PRESCRIPTION
28	BLUE HEALERS	ASTRO BLUES EP
29	VOODOO WALTERS	HOW TO BE HAPPY
30	MIKE ZITO	LIFE IS HARD
31	PAUL REED SMITH EIGHTLOCK	LIONS ROARING IN QUICKSAND
32	MICHAEL MESSER & CHAZ JANKEL	MOSTLY WE DRIVE
33	BETH HART & JOE BONAMASSA	SEESAW
34	MARTIN MCNEILL	SWEET SOUL SLIDE
35	ALTERED FIVE BLUES BAND	TESTIFYIN'
36	DEEP SIX BLUES	THE DEVIL'S HAND
37	GARNETTA CROMWELL	TIME TO SHINE
38	BERNIE MARSDEN	WORKING MAN
39	LONG ROAD HOME	ARE WE INVISIBLE
40	THE MIGHTY HOWLERS	BACK ON TRACK



Malcolm Holcombe

September 2, 1955 – March 9, 2024



Malcolm Holcombe was born and raised in Weaverville, North Carolina, about ten miles north of Asheville. In his teenage years, he played in local bands The Hilltoppers and Redwing, and in the early 1990's he started to perform solo as a singer-songwriter.

Between 1994 and 2022, Malcolm made eighteen albums, plus a smattering of additional CDs as composer or with other musicians.

Often described as a musician's musician, Holcombe was lauded by fellow songsmiths in and around Nashville for his lyrical skill and his powerful delivery. Reportedly, contemporaries like Emmylou Harris, Lucinda Williams, Steve & Justin Townes Earle, and Iris DeMent are /were fans of his.

No doubt at all that his musical soul-mate (and producer) was Jared Tyler, who was as RB Morris has called him, "the musical shadow of Malcolm" and as with many musicians, attuned to the soul of their partner, able to anticipate his next moves, predict what's needed when, and provide just the right embellishment and backbone on harmonies, guitars, man-

dola, dobro, banjo, etc.

Malcolm eventually succumbed to the ravages of cancer but his lyrics will continue to fight the fight. "I will not hide from the words of justice / I will not join the cries of liars / I will not keep my heart from climbing from the dust I swallowed behind. ...Great spirit lift me from despair / to your bosom sweet and fair" ('Conscience of Man').



Ian K McKenzie

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put them on the BiTS website 'Gig Guide'.

www.bluesinthesouth.com/gigs

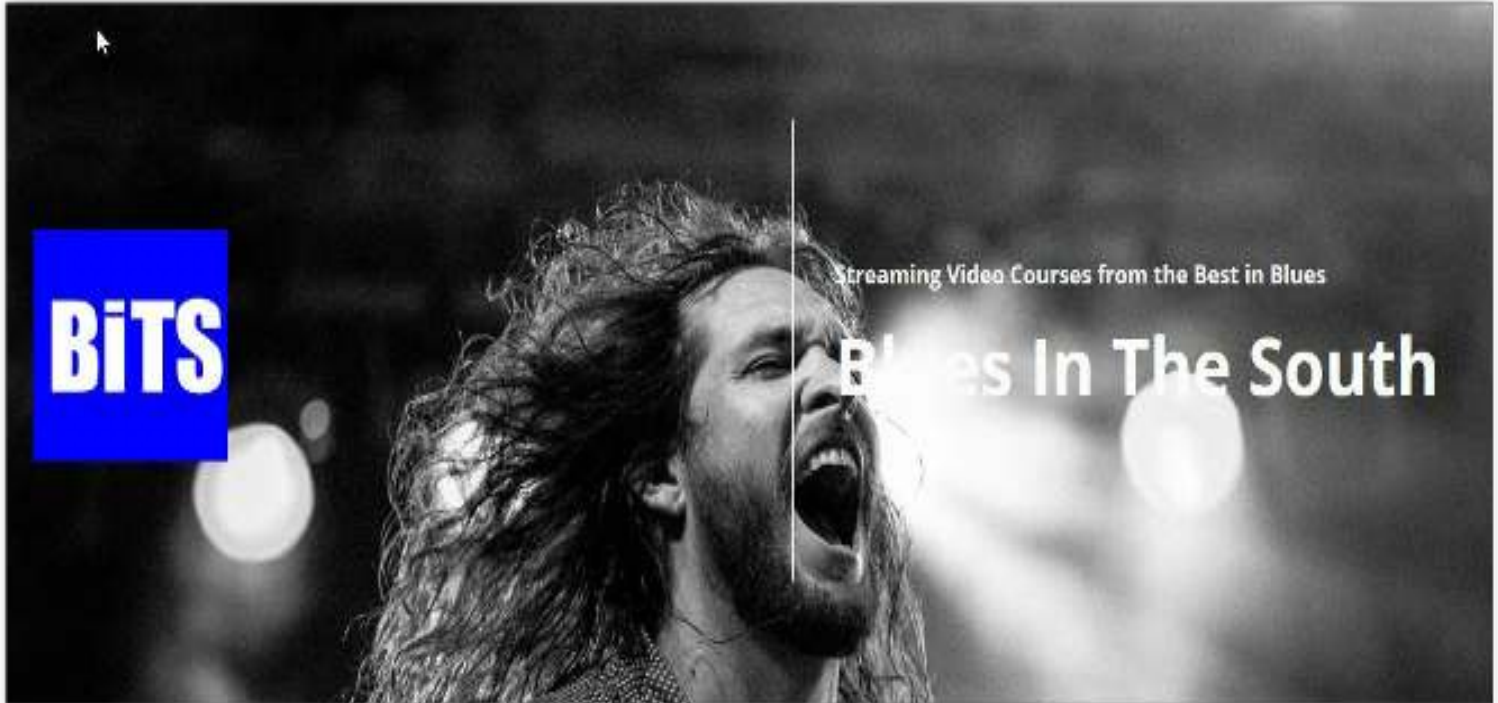
YOU CAN ENTER THE GIGS THERE YOURSELF—IT'S VERY EASY—OR AS AN
ALTERNATIVE, SEND THE INFORMATION DIRECT TO OUR GIG GUIDE

MASTER Andrew Cadwell <gigs@bluesinthesouth.com>

THE BITS GIG GUIDE HAS BEEN CALLED "THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE GIG GUIDE I HAVE EVER
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MusicGurus and BiTS believe that you should only pay for what you use so we don't charge subscriptions. Buy lessons and personal tutoring sessions with a one-off payment and that's it, they're yours to watch whenever, wherever and as many times, as you want.

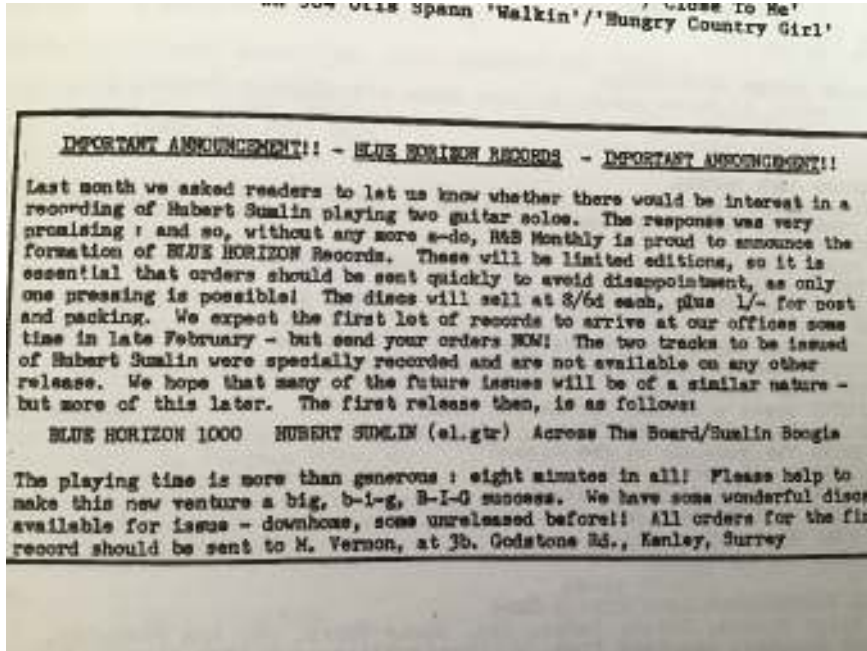
Tutors in the blues and jazz field include Marcus Bonfanti (guitar), Matt Walklate (harmonica), Paddy Milner (piano), Ron Sayer (guitar) and many more. For a full list of tutors go [HERE](#).

The Blue Horizon Records Story - Part One

By John Holmes

Blues fans of a certain age (probably well into their 60s) and those of more tender years, who perhaps discovered blues via Stevie Ray Vaughan and the Fabulous Thunderbirds, will likely be well acquainted with Blue Horizon Records, who arguably led the Sixties Blues Boom in the UK with a string of influential record releases, with their distinctive blue record sleeve and label.

Blue Horizon came about almost by accident, off the back of an independently produced magazine called R & B Monthly. This was the work



of three young blues fans - Purley Grammar school friends Neil Slaven, Mike Vernon and his brother Richard. Neil was a budding guitar player, and Mike was learning the harmonica, so, eager to be part of the local folk/blues scene, they formed a little combo, known as the Mojo Men, with two other friends. In Mike's own words this "probably wasn't their best move", but a much better one was when they later decided to start a low key monthly magazine for the benefit of the blues and R & B fans in the area, in spite of the recent early

issues of Blues Unlimited (edited by Mike Leadbitter - another pioneer name from the early days of British blues), which catered more for the pure blues lovers.

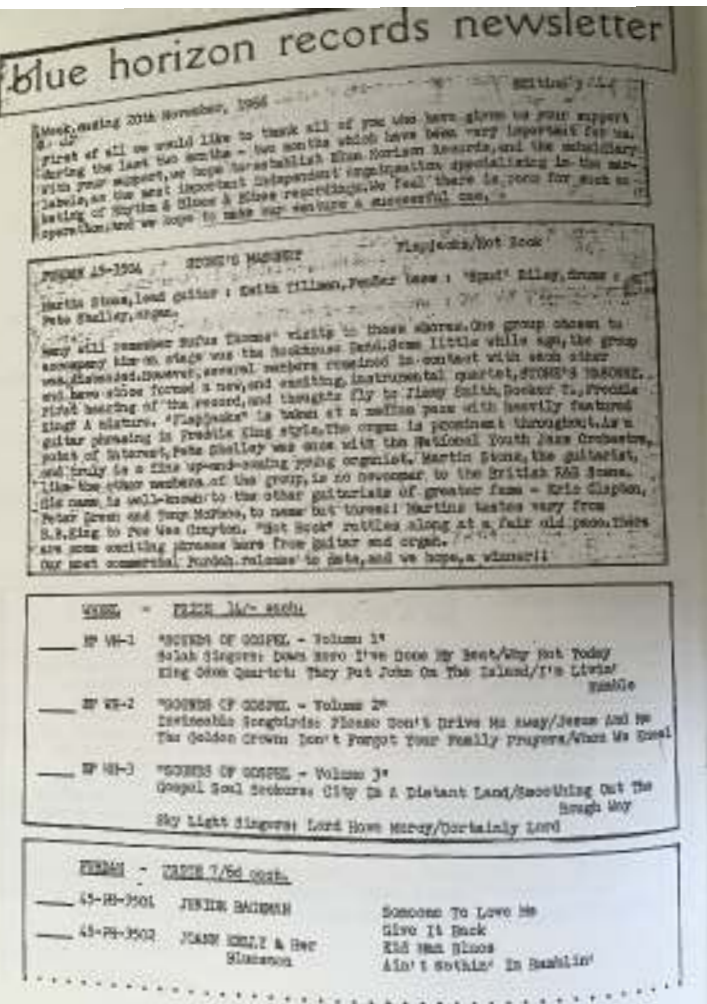
Having left school in 1963, Mike had been working for Decca Records, as a production assistant, and had worked with visiting blues pianist Curtis Jones, as well as the early Yardbirds, amongst others. Neil had also gained employment in the industry, with Esquire Records.

The three friends were keen to spread the blues gospel, and produced the first issue of their magazine in February 1964. This wasn't some big glossy affair, but home typed, home printed on the hand operated press, and distributed from home (actually the home of the Vernon brothers, who were assisted by their father). The first editorial claimed that "the aim of this magazine is to bring to the many Rhythm & Blues enthusiasts of this country, a true picture - to the best of our ability - of both the American and the British blues scene" - a very laudable aim indeed. That first magazine cost the princely sum of 9d (equivalent to around 3.75p!).

The magazine was popular, in a local low-key sort of way, so in issue 12 January 1965 they decided on a little experiment - a notice appeared in the magazine, asking readers if they were prepared to pay 10 shillings (50p) for a 45rpm. single of new recordings by Hubert Sumlin, the excellent and influential guitarist with Howlin' Wolf. The positive response prompted the announcement in the February edition of the formation of Blue Horizon Records, and the imminent release (as Blue Horizon 45-1000) of two instrumentals by Sumlin, backed by Neil Slaven, on guitar, that were recorded on a Grundig reel to reel tape recorder at the Vernon home

in Kenley the previous November, when Sumlin was in the UK with Wolf as part of the Folk/Blues Tour.

The 99 copies of the single were snapped up pretty quickly, which resulted in some more singles, on a similar number run basis, by such artistes as Woodrow Adams, George Smith, Snooky Pryor and Moody Jones (must admit I'd never heard of the first and last names noted, although George Smith and Snooky Pryor should be well known to most blues lovers). These were not new recordings, but "lifted" from rare US releases, although generally arrangements were made by Blue Horizon to legally lease the recordings.



However, there were other rare US recordings that were effectively being "bootlegged" around this time, on labels such as Python and Syndicate Chapter, by Freddy King, Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy and Howlin' Wolf, amongst others. Although bootlegging is generally seen as a bad thing, in fact these releases probably spurred the UK record industry into making many more such recordings available on a legitimate basis, from which hopefully the royalties found their way back to the original artistes.

Although they could probably have sold a good many more than 99 copies of most of the early Blue Horizon releases, the numbers were kept at that level because they understood that purchase tax would be levied on numbers exceeding 100, and that it would be payable upon manufacture, rather than following sales, which would have been

unaffordable for such a small enterprise. What they unwittingly did was to create a series of rare and highly sought after records in future decades!

The three friends also set up a label (Outa-Site) aimed at the R & B market, with initial releases by Johnny Guitar Watson and Larry Williams, who had toured the UK together to some acclaim in 1964, and for whom Vernon had produced a Decca LP that year. Indeed, Vernon was particularly impressed by Watson, remained in contact with him, and later introduced him to Dick James, at DJM records, for whom he recorded a string of fine blues/funk albums in the 1970s.

By issue number 23, a double sized edition in January/February 1966, R & B Monthly was taking up more time than they could commit to it, especially with Neil Slaven also now working at Decca, and consequently it was announced that it was to cease publication, although a newsletter would continue to be sent to subscribers, from August 1966, under the title Blue Horizon Records Newsletter - which in truth was really just a flyer for the record label, costing 5 shillings (25p) per 5 copies. This newsletter continued until February 1967, when it too ceased.

The record releases kept coming, with J. B. Lenoir, Driftin' Slim and Houston Boines. The Lenoir record was recorded in Chicago, in 1960, by blues historian Paul Oliver, and Mike Vernon states

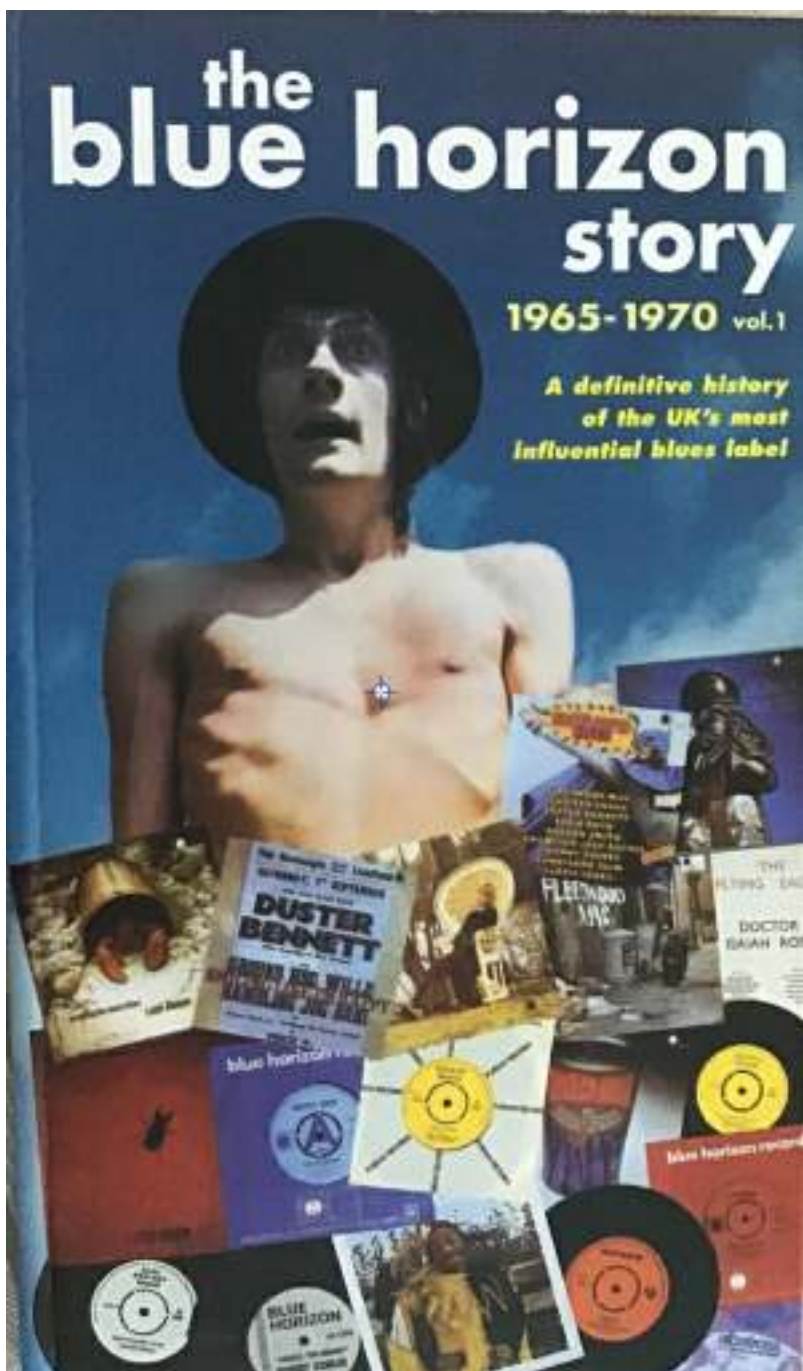
that “I Don’t Care What Nobody Say” is the one early Blue Horizon release that he particularly treasures as a fine example of this great bluesman.

In April of that year the first LP, by one man band Dr. Ross, and entitled *The Flying Eagle*, was issued. The album had been recorded by Bob Yates and Tony Russell the previous year (in Dr. Ross’s hotel room!) when he was in the UK as part of the 1965 Folk/Blues tour. This was the only LP release on the original Blue Horizon label, in spite of indications that there were more to follow.

Around this time they decided to try to offer an outlet for British blues, with the foundation of the Purdah label. Their idea was to issue recordings by British artistes, already contracted elsewhere, but under a pseudonym (which happened frequently in the US). The initial release was an acoustic performance by Groundhogs guitarist Tony McPhee, under the pseudonym T. S. McPhee, but that probably didn’t fool too many people! Unfortunately, the advertised follow-up, by Jo Ann Kelly (the fine singer/guitarist sister of Dave Kelly, who died much too young), was cancelled, because they weren’t happy with the recording.

In August a landmark Purdah recording by John Mayall and Eric Clapton appeared (‘Lonely Years’ b/w ‘Bernard Jenkins’). Vernon booked the Wessex Sound Studio, Old Compton Street, in the heart of Soho, and took a great deal of care in setting up a single microphone, subtly placed to capture the sound of Mayall’s piano and Clapton’s guitar together, to give the illusion of a 1950s Chicago recording. I remember eagerly snapping up one of the initial pressing of 500 records, with its distinctive yellow label, and being hugely impressed with the down-home sound, not that I had much idea in those days of what a 1950s Chicago recording actually sounded like! This record even achieved a review in the *Melody Maker* (MM), which called it “an extraordinarily authentic sound on this Mayall and Clapton collaboration”.

No doubt most buyers of the record also bought the *Bluesbreakers* album, which was released hot on the heels of the Purdah single - also produced by Mike Vernon, but on the Decca record label. In fact, a significant number of those Purdah sales could have been off the back of the LP, rather than the low profile single release, in spite of that MM review.



There were further Purdah releases, including the earliest recordings by The Savoy Brown Blues Band (a strong performance on 'I Tried' b/w 'I Can't Quit You Baby'), and instrumental outfit Stone's Masonry (featuring soon-to-be Savoy Brown guitarist Martin Stone), and Keith Tillman (later to work with the Bluesbreakers and Aynsley Dunbar Retaliation) on 'Hot Rock' b/w 'Flapjacks'.

All of the early Blue Horizon issues were pressed privately, with no link to any other record company or label, and this continued into the following year, with releases by Lowell Fulson, Hound Dog Taylor, and Sonny Boy Williamson, plus recordings by Champion Jack Dupree with Tony McPhee, which were probably taped at the sessions for his Decca album, "Blues From New Orleans to Chicago" (produced by Mike Vernon).



Mike (l) with Neil Slaven (r) and Keef Hartley, circa 1970.

That summer also saw the release of 'It's So Miserable To Be Alone' b/w 'Empty Arms', by Eddie Boyd with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. These were two rejected tracks from his Decca album (Eddie Boyd and his Blues Band), again produced by Vernon, and featuring John McVie, Aynsley Dunbar and Peter Green, alongside Mayall. Quite why these tracks were considered not good enough for the album is beyond me, as I consider them to be at least as good as anything else on the album.

Incidentally, the early Blue Horizon recordings appeared, not with the famous blue record label, but with a white one. I believe the Eddie Boyd single was the last white label release, and, like all of them, is now very rare. How I wish I had kept my copies of these early BH singles, although some have been reissued on CD on various compilations, such as "The Blue Horizon Story 1965 - 1970 vol

1" (Columbia 488992 2). Mike Vernon stated that he would liked to have reissued more of them on that compilation, but problems with leasing the material for a second time negated that.

By this time, Mike Vernon, and to a lesser extent his brother Richard, were the driving forces behind Blue Horizon. It was realised that, in order to take the project to the next level, they needed a wider circulation for their releases, which meant that it needed to be put on a more professional basis. They also needed to try to acquire some well known names to record for the label on a regular basis. Luckily, Mike had many contacts through his production work at Decca, where he had been working with John Mayall, Savoy Brown, and Ten Years After, as well as being the go-to producer for visiting US blues artistes.

His opportunity arose when the ever revolving line-up of the Bluesbreakers changed yet again. Peter Green, with whom Vernon had already worked on tracks for the "Raw Blues" LP (released on the Decca budget label, Ace of Clubs), including the haunting 'Evil Woman Blues', and John Mayall's "Hard Road" album, had decided to leave the Bluesbreakers. He and Green got on very

well, almost to the extent of feeling like kindred spirits. Aynsley Dunbar had also earlier left the band, as shortly would his replacement, Mick Fleetwood. Both Green and Dunbar were looking to form their own bands, and Vernon was able to be of assistance in getting a record deal.

Green had got fed up with the endless round of one-nighters with Mayall, and also with the music itself.

His first idea was to go to Chicago, in order to hopefully get to play with, and learn, from some of his heroes, but that jaunt was quickly quashed when the problem of getting entry to the USA to work as a musician was pointed out to him. He therefore decided to form his own trio, having seen Buddy Guy performing in London with just a bass player and drummer - Eric Clapton having reached a similar conclusion after witnessing the same concert, which resulted in the formation of Cream.

Mick Fleetwood was happy to join, but John McVie was not so sure, as he preferred the security of the weekly wage paid to him by John Mayall. Green therefore advertised for a bassist in the Melody Maker (even John Mayall did that when looking for a replacement for Green!). Trainee teacher Bob Brunning turned up for an audition at Green's flat, and after being introduced, made himself look a bit of a twit by saying "you've got the same name as that bloke in the Bluesbreakers"! In spite of that *faux pas* he got the job, at least until McVie decided to jump ship and join them.

The early line-up did some late night demo recording, which Vernon took to Decca, in his capacity as Staff Producer, with the idea of them releasing the material via Blue Horizon, but they declined. He therefore approached CBS, who were only too happy to discuss a deal, the upshot of which was the termination of Vernon's employment at Decca, because they did not want one of their employees also working for the opposition! Thus he became an Independent Producer, which job title he retained for many decades thereafter.

Although Green initially wanted the band, which he had named Fleetwood Mac, to be a trio, he was persuaded by Vernon to take a trip to Birmingham to see a group called The Levi Set, which featured a diminutive slide guitar player from Lichfield, called Jeremy Spencer, who simply loved the music of Elmore James—and old rock and roll—almost in equal measure. He was suitably impressed, and Spencer needed little persuasion to join the fledgling Mac.

Thus, the scene was set for Blue Horizon to take the next step to becoming a major label over the next two years.

Part 2 in next month's BiTS



JON WALMSLEY – FROM CLARKSDALE TO CORNWALL

By Lawrence Lebo



SPECIAL REPORT

I met UK native Jon Walmsley in America around 1989 when I was putting together my Little Big Band for my debut release project 'Lawrence Lebo And her Little Big Band: Don't Call Her Larry'. I already had ace banjoist Pat Cloud (you must check out his Charlie Parker influenced solos!) and mandolinist Bob Applebaum on board, and I was looking for the right acoustic guitarist who could keep up with them! Jon's name came up when talking to other professional musicians. I wasn't big on watching television, so I didn't recognize him from his long-term acting role in the American hit TV show 'The Waltons' nor did I recognize his voice as Christopher Robin in the Walt Disney animated film 'The Many Adventures of Winnie The Pooh'. He was all guitar player to me! Jon fit right in with my project and more than held his own. As a well-rounded musician who played both electric and acoustic guitars, he was deeply familiar with the blues and with swing. It was a pleasure to record and perform with him.

Over the years I've watched Jon perform and/or tour as a guitarist with a variety of acts including Richard Marx, Brian Setzer, David Koz, The Doobie Brothers, Gregg Allman, Merle Haggard, Roy Acuff, John Mayall, Denny Laine, Spencer Davis, Peter & Gordon, Jackie Lomax, Roger Daltrey, Eric Johnson and Strawberry Alarm Clock.

In 2017 Jon Walmsley recorded his first solo blues album "Goin To Clarksdale", inspired by a trip he and his wife took to the area. The album mixes classic blues standards with a few of Jon's original tunes, including the acoustic instrumental opening title track. Walmsley plays and sings throughout. He uses both electric



and acoustic guitar on specific selections. The album is available exclusively from Jon, on his website.

After returning home from the Clarksdale trip, Jon and his wife Marion decided they'd move to Cornwall, and in October of 2019 they made the permanent move. The American TV star is back on British soil! If you run into him at your neighborhood pub, do buy the lad a pint!!!

I asked Jon Walmsley to tell us about his life, career and his solo album "Goin To Clarksdale" This is what he told me ...



LL: You were born in Blackburn, UK, but your family came to America when you were just two years old. Where in America did you land and what brought the family there please?

JW: We came to San Diego. My mother's Uncle Jack was living there. He'd made a recent trip back to Blackburn, extolling the virtues of life in Southern California. He said, "California is a wonderful place to bring up a child." His stories about the sunshine and life overlooking Mission Bay were all my mother needed to hear. She was fed up with the cold, wet, northern England winters. Once she had her mind made

up, there was no stopping her. Six weeks later, my parents had sold their grocery business, their Morris Minor car, packed a few suitcases, and boom! There we were, in sunny California.

LL: When did you start playing the guitar? What sparked your interest?

JW: I always loved music. In one of my mother's diaries there's an entry about me, as a toddler in Blackburn, singing the latest hit - 'Bye, Bye, Love', by the Everly Brothers. That was released in 1957, so I would have been about a year and half. She also mentioned that I sang myself to sleep at night. In San Diego, at five or six, I was fascinated by music and television. One of the big shows at that time was "The Adventures Of Ozzie and Harriet," a sitcom based on the real-life family, the Nelsons, who portrayed themselves on screen. The highlight for me was the end of each episode, when Ricky Nelson would sing one of his hits, accompanied by his band, which featured the incredible James Burton on guitar. The concept of an electric guitar completely blew my mind. I didn't know anything about amplifiers, and I assumed that James was plugging his guitar directly into the wall socket! About the same time, my parents bought me a little Philco clock radio, so I'd be up in time for school. The great thing about the radio was that I could listen to music every night, fall asleep, and the radio would turn itself off automatically. I used to play a game in my head as I was drifting off. I'd listen to a line of a song lyric and try to guess what the rhyming line would be - before they sang it. I didn't know it at the time, but I was training my brain to write song lyrics! By seven, I was dying to play guitar. Mum took me to our local music store, Tailford's, in Bellflower, California. The man behind the counter said he thought my hands were too small and that we should come back in a year. A year later, immediately after my

eighth birthday in February 1964, The Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan show, and that was it! I started taking lessons almost immediately and took to it like a duck to water, much to my parents' surprise.

LL: Did you study music or are you an ear-player?

JW: I was very fortunate that Tailford's had a wonderful guitar teacher, Mike Catron, on staff. He was only eighteen, but already a master of the instrument. He had a beautiful orange Gretsch Chet Atkins model guitar, and he could play like Chet too, with amazing technique. When I told Mike that I wanted to play like The Beatles, he said, "I can play better than them!" It sounds like bragging, but it was the truth. His technique was flawless, and he was playing some really sophisticated music, like Johnny Smith jazz stuff, on guitar. I learned to read music from Mike, and then developed that more through studying classical music on the cello, flute and piano in school. My "by ear" playing kicked in at around thirteen, when I had a little rock band. This was 1969, so we were learning Jimi Hendrix, Cream, Creedence Clearwater, and of course, The Beatles tunes off records. This was also the period when I discovered the blues. Browsing through racks of sheet music books, I found one called "How To Play Lead Guitar." The first paragraph said something like "The best lead guitarists, B.B. King and Eric Clapton..." I thought, "This is it! I've got to check these guys out!" I've been listening to and playing the blues ever since, and I must say, it's served me very well in the sense that it provided a very solid musical foundation that I could fall back on when I needed inspiration on sessions and gigs. For me, the best guitarists are immediately identifiable by their musicality - their touch, their tone and melodic sense; their ability to communicate emotion and feeling. That's what I strive for as a player.

LL: You started acting at age 8 years. How did it all begin and where did it lead?

JW: I started playing guitar and performing at eight. Acting came a little later; I was ten - young, but not that young compared to other child actors. Shortly after I started playing guitar, I began to do little gigs - at schools, cub scout meetings, Grandmother's Clubs, Elks Lodges, and the like. The bigger the venue, the more I liked it. In my eight-year-old mind, it wasn't the Elks Lodge, it was the Hollywood Bowl! (I did eventually play there). An appearance on a live, Saturday morning kids talent show, "Fun For All" on KCOP, a local Los Angeles station, prompted an acting audition for a Peter O'Toole / Petula Clark film, "Goodbye, Mr. Chips." I didn't get the part - the producers decided to cast the boys' roles in England - but I did secure an agent, and began getting cast in television shows, not surprisingly, usually as an English boy, or in a musical role. The transition to acting seemed natural enough to me - The Beatles and Elvis had done it, right? The funny part was, I had absolutely no experience or training. It was all trial and error on my part. The kids I was cast with had often been "acting" since they were toddlers, and were already "old pros." I pretended I had experience, and tried to bluff my way through, with very mixed results! Fortunately, as I gained experience I improved, and by the time "The Waltons" came along, in 1972, I was in my mid-teens, more confident, and capable of doing a fairly realistic performance.



LL: While you are best known in the states for your 9-season role portraying Jason on the legendary TV show ‘The Waltons’, and all of it following reunion specials, you’ve also had an impressive career as a guitarist/touring musician. Would you tell us all about that please?

JW: When “The Waltons” ended, I felt grateful for the experience, but also for the fact that I now had full-time to devote to music. I’ve always thought that the best possible job is to do what you love, then find someone to pay you to do it. Through the years, I’ve had the opportunity to play in just about every possible situation, from backyard parties and smoky bars to world tours; from the recording studio to the Grand Ole Opry and Royal Albert Hall. Some highlights were appearing with The Doobie Brothers, Elvin Bishop, Gregg Allman, members of The Beach Boys, and quite a few of my fellow countrymen - Peter and Gordon, Chad and Jeremy, Spencer Davis, John Mayall, and Denny Laine of Wings and The Moody Blues; touring with the 60’s band Strawberry Alarm Clock and two world tours with the incredibly gifted singer/songwriter Richard Marx. I loved doing television music sessions, most notably with my pal, Dan Foliart, who composed the score for many hit series including “Roseanne,” “Home Improvement,” “Seventh Heaven,” and (my old Waltons cast mate) John Ritter’s final series, “Eight Simple Rules (For Dating My Teenage Daughter).” Each gig or session was a learning experience, and an opportunity for musical growth. To paraphrase the great classical violinist, Jascha Heifetz, after sixty years (and counting) of playing, I feel I’m still improving. That’s reason enough to keep at it!



LL: In summer 2017 you released a solo debut blues album titled “Goin’ To Clarksdale” that was inspired by a trip you made through the Mississippi Delta. Could you tell us about your concept and vision for this work please?

Jon with (clockwise from top) Eric Johnson, Buddy Miles, Lawrence Lebo

JW: In 2015, my wife Marion and I moved from Southern California to Maine, with the plan that I would concentrate my musical efforts on my own projects, playing the music I loved best - the blues. In 2016, I was booked to play at a casino in Tunica, Mississippi. As it happens, the casino is a short walk from where Robert Johnson lived with his mother while the two of them worked as farm hands, picking cotton. As we usually try to do, Marion and I took advantage of being in Mississippi to have a little holiday and play tourists. A friend who had previously made the trip made us aware of the “Mississippi Blues Trail.” This is a wonderful journey that takes one through the Mississippi Delta and beyond. Each stop on the trip is marked with a blue sign, describing the significance of the location. In addition, there is a downloadable app one can use for more in-depth information. Experiencing the land of so many of my musical heroes was tremendously moving. I felt inspired and compelled to honor the area and the memory of all the great musicians whose presence we felt.

LL: Were there other people/musicians who contributed to “Goin To Clarksdale”?

JW: It’s funny you should ask that. Actually, every note of every instrument on “Goin’ To Clarksdale” is played by me! This came about by way of a conversation I had with Jeremy Clyde (Chad and Jeremy). He was complaining that Chad, a great multi-instrumentalist, made recordings

that were too perfect, and opined that a recording could never really sound like a band when all the instruments were played by one person. I disagreed and set out to prove it. My concept for “Clarksdale” was that it should sound spontaneous, like a bunch of musicians sitting around a living room, relaxing, having a beer, and jamming away. Part of the plan was to not make the album “too perfect.” It was a challenge, as I am an innate perfectionist. I had to separate myself as producer and sometimes make choices that favoured feeling over perfection. Technically, I wanted the album not to sound too modern, but rather a bit more low-fi, like the records I grew up with in the sixties. I decided to do half covers and half originals. Looking back, I realize how many of the song lyrics - covers included - are somewhat autobiographical. On my website, I wrote a blog called “The Making Of Goin’ To Clarksdale,” where I describe each track on the CD in detail.

LL: You decided to make this CD available exclusively through your personal website. Why did you make that decision and how has that worked out for you?

JW: My parents owned a grocery store back in Blackburn. It was before the days of supermarkets. Everyone in the neighborhood came to their little corner shop for groceries, and as it turns out, to their living room - to watch television! Marion and I decided on a do-it-yourself approach to marketing. She designed my website, took all the photos, and did all the artwork for the CD, so it’s as much her project as mine; our own little “family business.” Unless you are lucky enough to be Taylor Swift, there is not a lot of money to be made in CD sales and particularly in streaming. I like the idea of operating on a smaller scale, but keeping whatever comes in, rather than the lion’s share going to a billion-dollar corporation.

LL: You have returned to living in the UK, in south western England. What brought you full circle and how are you liking it?

JW: My mum always said, “When we go back to England, we’re going to live in Cornwall!” Unfortunately, mum never realized that dream. But Marion -who had been journeying to Cornwall from Germany since her teens - and I did. We love it here. Because of its geographic location, Cornwall is not somewhere you pass through to get somewhere else, so whether it’s to live or just to visit, everyone here really wants to be here. It’s beautiful, mostly rural, with farms, fields, ancient woodlands, wind-swept moors, breathtaking coastal cliffs overlooking white sandy beaches, picturesque fishing villages, cozy pubs, nice people, and lots of sheep. I can’t really think of a nicer place to live.

LL: What can your many fans look forward to coming up for you?

JW: A lot more projects in the future. As a friend once said, I’m too dumb to quit! Without spilling the beans, in addition to planning more recorded projects, I hope in the near future to get out and do more live shows, in the U.K. as well as in the U.S. I’ll be keeping everyone posted on Facebook, and on my website: jonwalmsleymusic.com.

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Lawrence Lebo is an award winning, critically acclaimed Blues recording artist living in Northeast Ohio, USA. She can be found on the web at www.lawrencelebo.com



THE BiTS INTERVIEW: SOPHIE LORD

Sophie Danielle Lord started gigging at 16 and has by her account been in countless bands in a wide range of genres in various corners of the UK.

She has played with a Manchester PJ-Harvey/Nirvana-esque girl grunge group by the name of Mr. Heart. More recently she has been working with Plymouth, Devon bluesman Vince Lee and with drummer Lucy Piper both in the Lucy Piper Trio and with 'Stompin' Dave Allen.

Ian McKenzie spoke to her on the telephone.

SL: Hello.

BiTS: Hello, Sophie. It's Ian McKenzie.

BiTS: Okay, let's make a start then, shall we? I gather you started playing the guitar when you were about 16. What kind of music were you listening to then?

SL: I started playing electric guitar when I was 13 and then I switched over to bass when I was like 16/17. I mean, I was born in 92, so a lot of my musical influences are perhaps a bit cringe-worthy, looking back now, but I was big into the pop punk stuff and emo stuff, really, and all that sort of thing before I got into the blues stuff. So when I started to learn to play guitar, at the time of that era in early 2000, things like Green Day and stuff like that, and then it eventually evolved into the blues stuff as I got a bit older into my 20s, really. So I've got a very eclectic and weird music taste, I think, and it's been a bit of a journey to get to the blues [laughs].

BiTS: I guess at that age you didn't envisage yourself becoming a musician, did you? What was your career choice at that stage?

SL: Well, to be honest, I always wanted to do music. I didn't really have any alternative. I was just very pig-headed and stubborn and was determined that when I found the bass at 16/17, I was like, yeah, I want to do this. I was fortunate I had a lot of very good older friends around me who took me to see bands locally in Devon and Cornwall, and from watching just local gigs even, I really got a taste for it. I was like, oh, this looks like fun. I got into my first band when I was 17, and from then I was like, oh, there's got to be a way to make this as a living. I look back now and think blimey, what was I thinking? It was always on my mind, but I didn't realistically know how I was going to do it. I think I was just thinking I would wing it, which is what I'm continuing to do now all these years later.

BiTS: You say you found the bass. How did you find the bass? What actually happened?



SL: So I got into various bands like Ian Dury and the Blockheads. Basically I was playing around Devon and Cornwall in young bands, playing guitar and I met a few older bass players and realised that actually, I started listening to what they were playing and was more interested in that than playing the guitar parts. Whenever I listened to music, I realised the thing that really hooked me and I was interested in was the bassline, not the lead guitar parts or the rhythm guitar parts. For my sins, I was big into The Smiths when I was a teenager, and the basslines in those tracks by Andy Rourke were always like the focal point for me. I'd listen to that stuff and think, oh, this is really cool, and I'd love to be able to do this sort of thing rather than playing guitar. So that's kind of how I found the bass really. In a long, convoluted way, I was listening to The Smiths and lots of bands like Ian Dury and the Blockheads, and I noticed the bass and thought, wow! That's what really grabbed me.

BiTS: I've always thought myself that the bass is the core of the music, in the sense that it actually gives the music a bit of soul.

SL: Right.

BiTS: Is that your feeling as well?

SL: Yeah, I think so. You know, they always say it's the stuff that makes people move, right? I'm very much a rhythm section player. There's nothing I love more than sitting on the groove with a drummer, you know? It's funny, I've had loads of people who are non-musicians, including my family, who I love dearly, come to my gigs and they don't really understand what bass is. They kind of assume you're playing guitar. Even my dad said that to me once. He was like, oh, yeah, it's very good Soph, but I don't know what part you're playing. But as soon as you stop playing as a bass player, you notice it, you know, so it's obviously between that and the drums, the foundation for what everyone else does. So yeah, it's essential despite all the flac we get for being bass players, obviously [laughs].

BiTS: I take it when you first started you were using an electric bass, is that right?

SL: Yeah, yeah. To be honest with you, I played electric bass up until about two years ago. The double bass is very new to me. So yeah, it's always been electric bass. It's a new challenge the upright, and a challenge it definitely is [laughs].

BiTS: I want to come back a little later to talk to you about your, I'm not sure what it's called, the skeleton bass that you play now, but in the meantime, let's talk a little bit about how you learned to play. Did you have lessons or were you mentored by somebody?

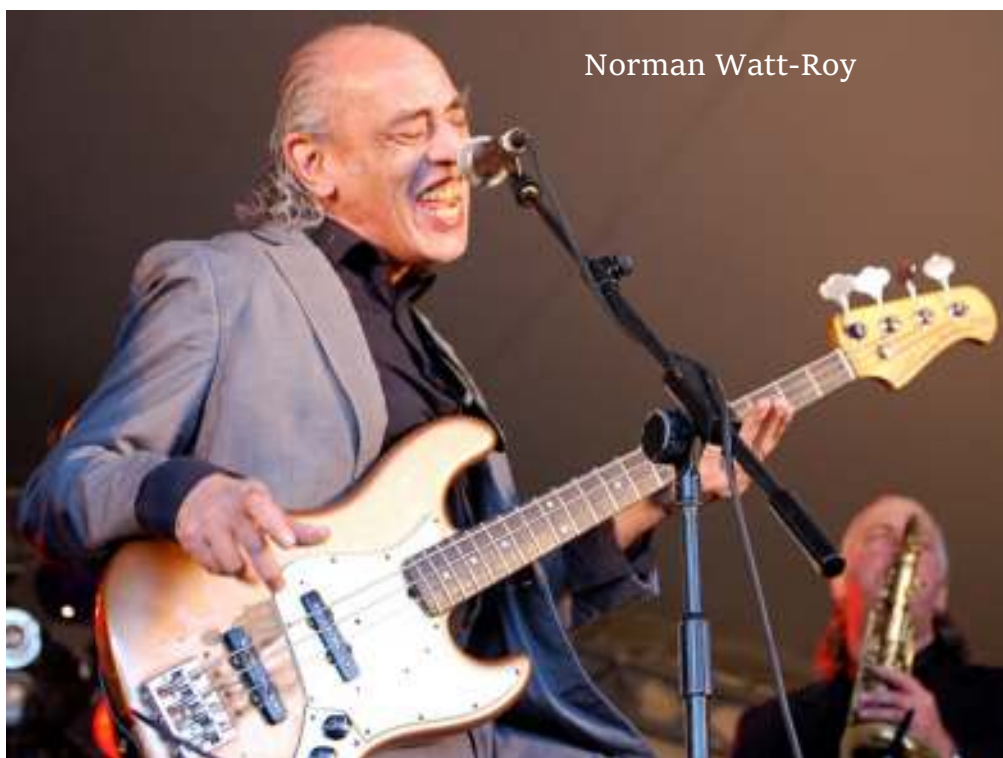
SL: In the initial instance, I just learned by sitting and listening to records and trying to replicate them. I got really obsessed with James Jamerson, the bass player for the Motown stuff. So I used to sit there and figure out his bassline. To be honest, I didn't have much of a social life when I was a late teenager up into my 20s. I used to hibernate in my room and pick apart those basslines and try and relentlessly remember them. Can't remember any of them now, of course, but at the



time, that was kind of my favourite thing to do. And then I met a few people along the way, lots of local great bass players who gave me a lot of tips and obviously, I was very fortunate as I think you know, that I met my big mentor, Norman (Watt-Roy), from the Blockheads. And there's another guy called Phil Curtis who was in Arthur Brown's band back in the day. He lived in Devon and Cornwall. He was a great bass player, and he was another big influence and they both used to show me loads of stuff and kind of point me in the direction of cool basslines and essential things to think about as a bass player. So yeah, that's kind of how I've learnt over the years, you know.

BiTS: Do you read music or are you solely by ear?

SL: So I tried and failed basically to read music. I did, for my sins, go to music college and I can



read very slowly. But to be honest, I'm solely an ear player. That's what I enjoy and I'm not the sort of player who if you put a sheet of music in front of me, I'd be able to seamlessly do it. You know, I'd have to think about it quite hard [laughs].

BiTS: Over the years, Sophie, you must have played with a number of bands. Was there one place where you were playing when you thought to yourself, good grief, what am I doing here? This is wonderful.

SL: [Laughs] Yeah, I've been fortunate to have a lot of those.

Most recently, actually, I would say that was the case with Vince and I. We were playing at a blues festival in California, and it's in a natural auditorium sort of thing in the woods. It's amphitheatre, sorry, not auditorium. And it's in the hills, the valleys in California and it's just stunning. Obviously to be playing there with Vince was, you know, a real privilege for me and I kind of was looking at him and going, oh, this is amazing. Like what are we doing here? Especially me being a jammer from Plymouth, a pirate-sounding nobody. I was like, wow, this is really special. So that's one thing that kind of stands out in my mind. I've been very fortunate that I've played with a lot of people that I really love and care about. So you know, off the top of my head, that's the most recent one I can give you [laughing].

BiTS: I gather that you have a label attached to you which is 'the Lord of the bass'. How do you feel about that?

SL: That's so silly. That comes from me being a cheeky git when I was a younger teenager and because my name is Sophie Lord, obviously, it was a sort of in joke amongst my friends and then when I first met Norman and those people, I really cheekily – I look back now and I cringe so hard. I said to him when I first met him, bow down to the Lord of the bass, and he thought it was hilarious. And to this day he still has on his phone Lord Sophie. That's what I'm listed as. Like I said, now I'm older and I'm like, oh, you were so necky, you know? But yeah, so that's where that comes from and like I say, I definitely cringe about it now, but at the time, it gave a good laugh, so what you going to do?

BiTS: Now I gather you spent a lot of time in London, but more recently you moved back down to Plymouth. Is Plymouth home? Was that where you came from originally?

SL: Yeah, yeah. I'm born and bred Plymouth, and yeah, I spent the first 19 years of my life here and I escaped in 2011. I moved to Salford for a couple of years up near Manchester, and then I moved to London. So as you said, I moved back here two years ago and yeah, I'm really happy to embrace my country bumpkin now [laughs].

BiTS: Now you've been working a lot with Vince Lee, and you've got this album out. Tell me about the making of that album. I gather you went out into the countryside to do it.

SL: Yeah. So basically, Vince and I, we play together a lot at home and we're very much keen to get out in nature as well. So you know Vince has been doing for a number of years videos of him out in the sticks literally, just him playing guitar and they're wonderful videos. And so when I came home, obviously I was dead keen to do that as well. So we just tend to, if it's a nice sunny day, we'll either sit out on the porch and do it because he's got a lovely little sun trap porch we can sit on and do videos and just play. We either jam or Vince has some tunes in mind that he wants to do. Or if it's a particularly



Sophie with her latest acquisition, a 'pancake' bass

spectacular day, we go, alright, let's take the van and go a bit further afield because where we are we're very fortunate to have Dartmoor National Park. So we're keen to exploit our good fortune in that regard and yeah, it's cool to just go out in nature and play music where there's no one around and it just feels very well, old school, I guess. So yeah, that's kind of what we do. We set up one mic and just film it and take the audio from that. And yeah, hope that is a good take on my part. It's always a great take on Vince's part, but you know, definitely some work needed on my end [laughs].

BiTS: It's not unusual for guitar players, Vince is certainly one of them, to have dozens of guitars. Is that true of bass players as well? Do bass players have dozens of basses?

SL: Well, you know, I always think for me personally like a bass is a bass, do you know what I mean? Like the bass frequency itself, as long as it sounds bass-y that'll do the trick. So I have a few, but to be honest with you, the reason I have them is – so I have, I don't know, must be five, and four of them I've got because people have very kindly in my life given them to me at some point or another. Like mentors and people who've been a really positive influence have said, this is for you, or whatever, and passed it on to me. So I've got about five or so, but I haven't gone too crazy with it. I've got obviously, the Frankenbass. I recently got an old Danelectro from 1958. That bass, I would say, is a special instrument. It's got its own sound which justifies having that,

if you know what I mean. Whereas, my other instruments are like Fender Jazz Bass, Fender P Bass, when you've got one of them, you don't need any more. You don't need any more variations unless you want a different colour, I guess, really. But the Danelectro is a stand-alone special instrument and yeah, so I'd say I've got five. And to be honest with you, Ian, I was living in a cupboard in London for nearly ten years, and I crammed as much stuff in there as I could, including an electronic drum kit somehow, and luckily that limited any of my temptations to buy any more.

BiTS: Tell me about this, obviously it's got a name. Vince calls it the Frankenstein bass. I don't know whether you call it the Frankenstein bass but tell me all about it.

SL: Yeah. Okay. So yeah, I call it the Frankenbass, Frankenstein bass, Terminator bass because it's indestructible. Basically, this time two years ago I was looking to move back to Plymouth and I'd always wanted to play double bass and I was sat there on Facebook marketplace and suddenly this freaky thing from out of space appeared, the Frankenbass and a guy was selling it about an hour out of London for £175. And what was funny is, Vince and I've known each other a very long time and he's always been a hero to me, really, and so when I saw it, I sent him a picture and said, here, Vince, what do you think of this because we'd recently been talking about me picking up a double bass? This was before I moved back home and he was like, wow, I don't know what that thing is, but, you know, screw it, for £175, get it? It's going to be like a training wheel.

BiTS: I take it that it's got a wooden fingerboard and the rest of it is metal or something like that, is it?

SL: Yeah. So basically, what it is, is this guy who was selling it, he's the second owner, but he was telling me the story of it is that it used to be a real double bass, but it fell out the back of a lorry, apparently, or the van, or whatever, and so the only thing that was salvageable was the neck, which is a beautiful neck. I think it's an old classical neck. It's stunning. Lovely instrument. And the original owner, his dad, I

believe, was a welder and he went, well, we can do something with that. So he welded this climbing frame and attached the neck to it and the crazy thing is, considering it something that hasn't got a body, it's the bassiest thing you've ever heard. It's mental.

BiTS: And you can only play it, of course, through an amplifier, I guess.

SL: Yeah, yeah. I mean you can, obviously you can practise acoustic with it, but you don't get the kind of, the bass-y feeling from it. So it's better to plug it in much to my family's annoyance when I'm there bashing away at it.

BiTS: Now I gather that you're going or planning to go to the USA later on this year, is that right?

SL: Yeah. So Vince and I are going back to California again for a month this time. We went for three weeks last time, and we feel like we struggled to fit it all in because we were going from



place to place, trying to see as many people as possible. So we thought alright, let's do an extra week this time and take a whole month away for it. So yeah, it's exciting.

BiTS: Are you organising gigs, or is it just a kind of random turn-up and play?

SL: So it's like a working holiday, I guess. Last time we were very fortunate. Well, Vince has got lots of friends over there who are very keen to play, so there's a few promoters over. There's a great guy called Cadillac Zack, who puts on brilliant blues gigs over there and we hooked up with him. Our friend in San Diego, Rick Lee, who's a bit of a legend over there, he plays drums, and he joined us and put some gigs on at Gator by the Bay Festival and things like this. And so this time, it's kind of an extension on that. Rick has very kindly got us some more gigs. We're going to do the Cadillac Zack thing again and we're playing the Blues Festival again. So yeah, it's going to be



Sophie, with Dave Allen and Lucy Piper

kind of hitting some of the same areas, but also a couple of new ones ad-lib. I think there's like ten gigs or something, but obviously, we're just going over there to have a holiday really and catch up with people, have a jam here and there and, you know, also catch some sun because it's been bloody miserable down here.

BiTS: Do you write music yourself, or do you write songs?

SL: I'm afraid I don't, no. I mean, I leave that to the more talented people. I just kind of bash along and try and keep up. But yeah, I'm not much of a writer myself. I'm strictly a bass player [laughs].

BiTS: Perhaps you'll get inspired whilst you're in the States.

SL: Yeah, yeah, definitely. You know, to be honest, like Vince has written some great original material that we've been working on, and so I'm keen to get that together and showcase what he can do because I love his original stuff, so it'd be great to have that out there.

BiTS: What's your kind of long-term ambition, Sophie? Have you got plans of where you would like to go and play or somebody you'd like to play with?

SL: Well, to be honest, Ian, I'm happy as Larry really. Vince has always been a big influence on me, a big hero to me. So it sounds really cheesy, I know, but it's true and he knows that. So I'm really happy to be playing with someone like him and the way I see it is whatever he wants to do, I'll be quite happy to go and do it with him. Do you know what I mean or, you know, tag along or whatever? Well, one of my big ambitions is to get better at playing double bass because that's an endless challenge and it's exhausting as well. So that's a big ambition to get better at that to the point where I feel like I'm actually a double bass player and not just an electric bass player clinging on for dear life [laughs]. So that's a big ambition. A big ambition also, to get Vince's original material out there and just have fun and play where ever anyone wants us. Yeah, I know

that sounds really basic, but that's it. I'm a really chill person and I just love playing bass and I love playing bass with Vince, so I'm pretty happy to carry on doing that if I'm so lucky to.

BiTS: Back a very, very long time ago, when I was about 16, like you were, I used to play in a skiffle group and I played the bass, actually a tea chest bass and I always had to wrap my fingers with sticky tape in order to stop them from getting so sore. Have you ever done that? Do you do that?

SL: Oh. Oh, man, Ian, so the Frankenbass has gone through a process of evolution since I first got it because Vince has very kindly done a lot of work on it. When I first got it, it was like having barbed wire strings on it, like it was killing my fingers. Like it was all gnarly, and so Vince swapped them for his steel string, and I went through a period last year of gigging on those and slapping them and the thing is, they're quite high-tension strings, so my fingers would just be like, you know, like bubble-wrap fingers, you know? Oh, man, it was so painful. I actually put plasters on when I was playing, and people would laugh because the plasters would fling off while I was playing. So yeah, I feel your pain there. Luckily, now I've got kind of, what are they called, synthetic gut strings on there so they're a bit more manageable. They're a bit like elastic bands, you know, so that makes it a bit better. But I tell you what, my fingers are like, for a chick, I've got some really ugly fingers as a result of that thing. They just eat through my fingertips. But never mind, you've got to suffer for your art, haven't you?

BiTS: Just to return to the Frankenbass for a moment, are you able to slap it like you can with a big one?

SL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Do you know what, it's surprising because like I said, something that's not got a body and is a metal frame, it gives a great slap sound. Even acoustically you'd be surprised how well it comes across, you know?

BiTS: That's great.

SL: Obviously nothing is going to beat the acoustic instrument, but it fits in the van, as Vince says, and it fits in my room as well, which is great, doesn't annoy the neighbours and it also looks like a weapon which is quite handy if you've got annoying punters at a gig. [Laughing] But anyway, I shouldn't say that.

BiTS: Sophie, I won't take any more of your time. Thank you very much indeed for talking to me.

SL: Brilliant. Alright, that sounds great, Ian. Thanks for your time.

BiTS: Sophie, thank you very much indeed for talking to me. It's been great. Absolutely wonderful.

SL: Brilliant. Thank you, Ian. Take care.

BiTS: Look after yourself. Bye.

SL: Yeah, thanks. Take care. Thanks, Ian. Bye.

BiTS: Bye.



THE BiTS INTERVIEW: ELLES BAILEY

Born in Bristol, Elles Bailey is an English blues roots, rock singer, songwriter, and pianist. She has recorded three studio albums including her debut album “Wildfire” in 2017, “Road I Call Home” in 2019 and the chart topping “Shining In The Half Light” in 2022 winning several awards for her work.

Apart from her own headline appearances, Bailey has provided the opening act for Jools Holland, Don McLean, Van Morrison, Eric Gales, Mike Farris, the Kris Barras Band and King King. She is a presenter on Planet Rock Radio.

Her stunning new album “Live at the Fire Station” has just been released and Ian McKenzie spoke to her at her home.

EB: Hello.

BiTS: Elles? Hello, it's Ian McKenzie. How are you?

EB: Oh, I'm good. How are you?

BiTS: Are you okay to do the interview now?

EB: I'm just having AirPods issues. Have you got me?

BiTS: I can hear you, but you sound very distant.

EB: Can you hear me now?

BiTS: Ah, that's much better.

EB: Yeah, the AirPods were clicking on and off. I'm sat mixing my new album, and basically, it's amazing. I can plug into my producer's studio.

BiTS: Oh wow!

EB: Yeah, via something called Audiomovers. So I'm sat in my studio and then we've got Zoom on. But because of that, there's like so many different headphones attaching to different pieces of technology, and I've just had to swap it all over [chuckling].

BiTS: It's utterly incredible what you can do these days, isn't it?



EB: Yeah, it really is amazing. Yeah, but I'm actually going up in person tomorrow.

BiTS: I want to talk to you about the "Fire Station" album, but before we do that, let's have a chat about awards and things because you're nominated a couple of times for the upcoming UK Blues Awards. How do you feel about awards shows?



EB: I feel like they're a really nice thing. I feel, especially when you're an independent musician. You're working really, really hard. Often, you don't have a big team around you and when bodies of people nominate you, it really does help make the hard work sort of feel all worth it. So I feel very honoured that I've been massively supported by the blues scene and the Americana scene here in the UK and very, very proud to have been nominated and won some of their awards.

BiTS: The surprise to me, to be honest with you, was the DJ award because I have to candidly admit I've not heard your radio station, although I'm about to listen to it as soon as I can. Was that a surprise to you?

EB: [Chuckles] Yeah, that was a real surprise to me, actually one because, you know 99.9% of the time, I feel like an artist, and there's this 1% of the time that I'm a radio presenter [laughing]. It was quite interesting. It sort of came about by absolute chance really and because I don't go into a studio and record it, I record it from home, I often forget that it's a massive part of what I do now, and I love being able to do it. I love finding new music and especially being able to shout about some of the incredible artists that I can find. But it is something that I never hustled for and it kind of came to me and I just feel very blessed to have the show. I love doing the show and I love Planet Rock, but then also to get nominated, it's just really surreal. I think that was just, yeah, such a surreal thing really, to have a nominated radio show when I only started two years ago [laughs].

BiTS: Yes, that's absolutely fabulous and good luck. The votes are in now and it's all in the hands of the counters. We're just sitting waiting now to see what's going to happen.

EB: Exactly. I mean, it's just a pleasure to be nominated no matter how they land, so.

BiTS: Right, now talk to me about the "Fire Station" album, which I have listened to a couple of times, and I think it's absolutely fabulous. The sound is amazing on it. Absolutely incredible. What happened?

EB: It's pretty good, isn't it? It's really good. I'm very proud of it. And this is coming from someone who does not like live albums. So there's a reason why I've never released a full band live record, but it really just felt like this tour was something super special, especially the show at the Fire Station and we had it all filmed as well. Often you can put a lot of money into filming something and then something goes wrong, or you don't like the performance, but it felt like actually, that was probably our best performance of the tour [chuckling], which was lucky.

BiTS: Was it just one show Elles, or did you record a couple of shows and put them together or something?

EB: Well, I actually recorded every single show on the tour, which was about, I can't even remember, a lot. Seventeen shows, maybe something like that, but it is all one show. It is all the Fire Station show. I was starting to switch in a few from like Bristol or London and then I thought, actually the Fire Station show was really, really good. It flowed really well and so I just decided not to take any from any other shows. So I do have a whole load of shows in my back pocket [chuckles], but this is just all one show.

BiTS: It's like I said, it's absolutely terrific. The only disappointment to me is there's only one track where you play the piano.

EB: Oh, yeah. I was a bit rusty [laughing]. I've been playing a little bit more now and I'm getting better again.

BiTS: You've got lots and lots of gigs coming up in the near future, including I see, the Sidmouth folk festival.



EB: Yeah, the Sidmouth Jazz and Blues Festival. Yeah, that's going to be great on the 27th of May, and it's me and Mica Millar doing a co-headline. So very excited about that.

BiTS: Is that the first time you've done that one?

EB: It is, yeah.

BiTS: Do you have any idea what the arrangements are going to be? What sort of venue you're playing in?

EB: We're playing on the headline stage, so whatever that stage is. I think it's an outdoor stage.

BiTS: Oh, okay. Yes, absolutely.

EB: Yeah. So we're playing there.

BiTS: Let's get back to the "Fire Station" album. Do you have a favourite track? Is there one that is a great deal better than you thought it was going to be or something like that?

EB: I don't think so. It feels like, as a whole body of work, it just feels like something really nice and something that I'm very proud of. I love the opening track, 'The Game'. The closing track, 'Sunshine City' with Demi's vocal solo is amazing. 'Help Somebody' and 'Medicine Man', I've never really done live tracks before, so it's really nice to have some of those tracks from earlier albums on it as well. It's not just the "Shining in the Half Light" album.

BiTS: The band sounds amazing. Tell me something about the band.

EB: Well, they are amazing. They're truly phenomenal players and Jonny Henderson on Hammond, Matthew Waer on bass, Matthew Jones on drums, Joe Wilkins, and they all played on my album "Shining in the Half Light". So I basically toured with the same musicians that played on the record, and that's actually the first time that I've done that because I'd made two earlier albums in Nashville. So although they featured, you know, Joe on guitar or Jonny on organ, I



hadn't done a record with my touring band, and we did that in 2020. And then going out with the band that you made the record with is just such an amazing thing to do. We added Demi in 2022 and she brought so much to the show as well, and it's really great having another female vocalist because we all sing but having that sort of high-top vocalist has just added so much, and she plays guitar and tambourine. And yeah, it's great.

BiTS: Was there stuff that went wrong? Did you have to abandon some tracks? I guess you've already said that you didn't.

EB: I actually did. I abandoned one track, which was a cover, which I just wasn't happy with my vocal performance on it. So that was the only one I abandoned. And I do actually have another version of it from another gig, but I decided not to

put it on the album, so we've just dropped one. It was one of the encore songs. So yeah, there was one that got canned, but other than that, it's as the show rolled [laughs].

BiTS: Absolutely terrific. I love it. I love it. I'm to be playing some stuff on my radio show before very long.

EB: Oh, thank you for the support. I'm so glad you enjoy it.

BiTS: I think actually, to be honest with you, I think it's one of the better things that you've done. I mean, I liked the "Shining in the Half Light" album, but I think it's even better than that.

EB: Well, bless you. Well, thank you very much.

BiTS: Tell me what the future holds for you. You suggested to me that you're working on another album at the moment. What's that?

EB: Yeah, that's my new studio album, which is going to be announced very, very soon and I've just signed a deal. So that's really exciting. I've been fully independent up until now and I've finally relented the control and thought it's just got a little bit too big for me to do by myself. And I'm really excited to be working with Cooking Vinyl on this new album and I'm excited about the album. We're in the final stages of mixing and it's all set to be mastered next week, so it's really,

really at the end of the musical creative process. And now it's all about getting the artwork sorted and telling people about the new album.

BiTS: Does mixing come naturally to you? You've got a good ear?

EB: I mean, I'm not mixing it myself [laughing]. I definitely don't have the talent to do that, but my producer, Dan Weller, is mixing it as we speak.

BiTS: Oh, okay.

EB: And it's a collaborative process, you know, so it's very much the two of us working together.

BiTS: And when is this likely to come out?



EB: Oh, you'll have to wait and see [chuckling]. I can't tell you yet.

BiTS: Ah, you're being defensive then [laughs].

EB: Yeah, now the other people involved, I don't know what I'm allowed to say or what I'm not allowed to say anymore, but all I'll say is we're going to be announcing it very soon. I'll get this live album out and then I'll give you guys about a week or so to have a breath and then I'll announce the new album.

BiTS: Let's take a step back for a minute. Were you badly affected when COVID came along, and gigs were cancelled? Did you have a lot of stuff that disappeared?

EB: Yeah. My goodness. Like so much stuff. So much stuff.

BiTS: As far as you're concerned, is that over now? Are the audiences coming back?

EB: I do think they are? Yeah, it definitely does feel like it's coming back, but it has been a really long, hard road. I mean, getting shows back in Europe has definitely been a lot of hard work and I know a lot of people will feel that they may have done well in their own country, but going back out to other countries has felt a little bit like starting again. But it is coming back, and I'm pleased,

and I didn't think it sort of affected my career too much, but actually, now it probably did like everyone else's, but I just made lemonade with the lemons.

BiTS: And what does the future hold for you? Like I said, you've got the Sidmouth gig coming up and one or two other festivals, I think as well. How is it looking for you in the future?

EB: It's looking very, very good. There's a lot of things that I have not been able to announce yet, but they're going to be announced quite soon and there's a lot of bucket list festivals that I've never played that I'm going to be playing and a bit more travel to be had. And, of course, once we announce a new album, there'll be a new album tour to go with it.

BiTS: Are you planning a big tour to go with the album?

EB: Yeah, yeah, yeah. There'll be a big tour to go with the album, yeah.

BiTS: And tell me something about the stuff that's on the new album. Is it new music, or is it covers or what?

EB: It's all new music. So all written by myself and co-writers and recorded with exactly the same team that did "Shining in the Half Light", but with different backing vocalists. So Demi is singing on it. I've got another guy called Liam Cromby singing on it and a girl called Katey Brooks, all who are amazing artists in their own right. So it's a real pleasure to collaborate with everyone.

BiTS: Do you have any plans to go to the USA and do a tour there?

EB: I mean, if someone will pay for my visas, which I think are around £8000, then I'll happily go, but yeah, it's definitely on the cards, but you've got to go at the right time. The visas are extortionate, and I do think it's really important for people to know that. When they see artists going over to America like the amount of money that has been invested just to get people there and really hats off to people who are going because it is exceedingly expensive before you've even booked your flights. I feel really proud of all of my friends who've been going over and doing it.

BiTS: Tell us something about you. You've got a young baby, I believe. A boy or a girl?

EB: I've got a boy. He's almost three now, so time flies.

BiTS: Do you travel with the boy? What's his name?

EB: He's called Jasper, and no, he generally stays at home.

BiTS: Oh, okay and that's probably a bit of a wrench.

EB: Yeah, definitely. And actually it gets harder and harder as they get older.

BiTS: Yeah, I bet it does too.

EB: But I've had quite a lot of time at home over the last three months, so that's been really nice. I finished touring in November, so it's been nice to be in one place for a while.

BiTS: Tell me something, what are your aspirations for the future? Where do you want to be say in five years' time?

EB: I really aspire to artists like Bonnie Raitt and Imelda May and Beth Hart. So following their kind of path, being able to sort of, you know, play bigger venues and just release quality music like I'm not in it for a flash-in-the-pan kind of career. I'm in it for the long haul, so yeah.

BiTS: Have you ever heard of a band called Beaux Gris Gris?

EB: I'm very good friends with Beaux Gris Gris. Yeah, they're brilliant. They just made a music video for me.

BiTS: I was reading about them recently. They seem to maintain two bands, one for the UK and one for the USA.

EB: Yeah, because they live in the USA, so they've got their UK bands and their US bands. But yeah, they're brilliant, amazing artists. I'm playing their new song on my radio show this week.

BiTS: [Laughs] Of course you are. Listen, I won't take too much more of your time because I know that you're very busy and all the rest of it. Thank you very much indeed for talking to me. Congratulations on the fabulous album with the "Fire Station" one, and I'm looking forward to hearing the new one as well.

EB: Thank you so much. Looking forward to it and thank you for the support.

BiTS: You look after yourself. Have a good day.

EB: You too, take care.

BiTS: Bye then, bye.

EB: Bye. Bye-bye.

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For a number of years now, Andrew Cadwell has been valiantly supporting BiTS by being the GIG GUIDE COORDINATOR.

This is an honorary post, which is a polite way of saying, "There's no money in it"!

The job involves managing the GIG CALENDAR on the BiTS website (www.bluesinthesouth.com), receiving emails from artists, searching if possible for gigs in the BITS area, which is roughly defined as the area of England south of the M4 (with a line extended in to the North Sea) and doing whatever you consider necessary to keep the site one of the best gig guides you will find. The direct link to the site is <https://www.brownbearsw.com/freecal/BITS>)

Andrew has decided to retire and we are looking for a replacement for him in this key job. There are hundreds of hits on the site every week and it is considered a key resource by both musicians and venues. Are you interested? Support will be given by Andrew and by Ian McKenzie as required..

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Headlining the opening night on May 23 is Tony Hadley, the former lead singer of Spandau Ballet, showcasing his iconic voice alongside his jazz band and a swinging brass section. Sponsored by Molyneux Financial Planning and Charles Stanley Wealth Managers, this special concert promises a repertoire that pays homage to jazz legends like Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, and Frank Sinatra, as well as featuring Spandau hits like 'True' and 'Gold.'

On May 24, the festival offers a dynamic double bill featuring Roachford and MF Robots, delivering a high-energy mix of Soul, Funk, and Acid Jazz. Andrew Roachford will be performing hits from his acclaimed back catalogue and new repertoire, expect to hear hits such as Cuddly Toy, Only to Be with You and many more. MF Robots bring their unique blend of acid jazz to Sidmouth who were formed by ex- founding member of The Brand-New Heavies Jan Kinkade and vocalist Dawn Joseph.

The following day, all the way from Havana, Cuba the incredible award – winning jazz pianist and composer Roberto Fonseca headlines on Saturday 25 May with his all-star band. Known for his work with the Buena Vista Social Club, Fonseca is one of the most dazzling jazz musicians to come out of Cuba and hit the limelight across the globe.

Sunday, May 26, sees British-Jamaican singer Ruby Turner MBE, taking the stage with her band, treating the audience to hits like 'I'd Rather Go Blind' and 'It's Gonna Be Alright.' Turner, known for her soulful voice and R&B mastery, has collaborated with notable artists such as Brian Ferry, UB40, and Mick Jagger.

The festival closes with a wonderful double bill on Monday 27 May as the festival celebrates two award – winning British female singer songwriters. Elles Bailey the smoky-voiced human dynamo, who straddles the worlds of Americana and the Blues, garnering accolades in both and British Soul singer Mica Millar and her full band. Mica also won Jazz FM's prestigious 'Soul Act of The Year 2022' award alongside receiving a nomination for 'Breakthrough Act of The Year'.

Ian Bowden, the festival director commented "We have a stunning and eclectic line up for the third-year festival. Our programme offers a wide variety of exceptional music including Jazz, Swing, Blues, Roots, Soul, Funk, Latin, Cuban and Gospel music".

The festival's outdoor performance stage in Blackmore Gardens will host five headline concerts and three days of high-quality daytime music, featuring artists like Ian Shaw, Snowboy and The Latin Section, and Acantha Lang who grew up in New Orleans, bringing her breath-taking blend of American Soul to the festival.

The daytime program, kindly supported by Sidmouth Town Council, Visit Sidmouth, Sidmouth Design, and Vitesse PSB, promises fifteen acts over three days. A variety of fantastic food concessions with offerings from around the world will be provided by local East Devon caterers, as well as a fully licensed bar managed by Branscombe Brewery.

Additionally, a free educational program, including workshops, masterclasses, and live performances, will run from May 25 to May 27, thanks to support from the Big Lottery Fund, Keith Owen Fund, East Devon District Council, and the creative East Devon fund through the UK shared prosperity fund.

Attendees are encouraged to secure their spots early, with early bird tickets available for a limited period. Ticket packages include options for a three-day outdoor music daytime ticket, a combination of headline acts and daytime music, as well as VIP and corporate packages.

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REVIEWS



Bex Marshall—Fortuna—Dixie Frog Records

It's twelve years since the release of Bex's last album "House of Mercy" and this new one kicks off with 'Preaching to the Choir' a gospel banger based on rolling piano and organ with Bex trading vocals with Shola Adegrove. The Buddy Miller song 'Dirty Water' is a lowdown and dirty blues with Bex's voice sounding just fabulous but the rocker 'I Can't Look You in the Eyes' is an original co-written with Scott Coopwood who also provides the guitar solo alongside Bex's slide. '5 AM' is another original a moody late-night blues ballad but 'Jungle' picks up the pace with boogie piano (Toby Baker) and electric slide guitar from Bex and 'Table

for One' is funky with bass from Robert Eugene Daniels (aka Red Bass) – "I hope you like your meat bloody, because I'm sticking my steak knife in..."

The title track is a fast-paced, slightly jazzy instrumental featuring Bex's guitar and driven by Richie Stevens' drums and 'Lay Down and Die' is a riff-y rocker. 'Scrapyard Dog' is a delicious easy-rolling tale about a fearless animal in a dangerous world and closer, 'When It's Gone' is a poignant tribute to the late Robert Eugene Daniels who died during lockdown but was able to record bass for five of the tracks here (the remaining songs have Aurora Manola on bass). The song has B.J. Cole playing melodic dobro throughout alongside Bex's heartfelt vocals. The album was recorded at London's Snakepit Studios and was co-produced by Bex and Nick Hunt and it sounds great – listening blind you'd swear this was an American recording with American musicians and song-writing but for me it's Bex's voice that is the real star here, real soulful singing and NOT shouting!

Graham Harrison



Mike Zito—Life is Hard—Gulf Coast Records ASIN: B0CRH8ZJHL

One of the things I like most about blues artists is how they express emotion through their music – BB King, Peter Green and Shemekia Copeland were/are all masters at it – and while I'm not really a fan of blues-rock I've always admired Mike Zito's ability to produce emotionally-drenched work.

His new album was recorded after the death of his wife Laura from cancer in 2023 and Mike planned the album with Laura before she died so as you can imagine there is an incredible emotional charge in many of these songs, The album was produced by Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith who both also play guitar here but it's Mike who contributes all the solos. Also involved are Reese Wynans (keyboards), Calvin Turner (bass), Lemar Carter (drums), Paulie Cerra, Jennifer Kumma and Anna Spina (horns) and Jade Macrae and Dannielle Deandrea (background vocals).

We begin with a version of Little Milton's very appropriate 'Lonely Man', a hard driving blues with riffing brass and a blistering guitar solo from Mike then Fred James' title track is a brooding slow blues with more great guitar and Mike's heartfelt vocals "Life is hard; and then you die!"

'Have a Talk with God' is a melodic funky song by Calvin Hardaway and Stevie Wonder but it's Mike's own song 'Forever My Love' that for me is the standout track here - a slow blues with strings and biting lead guitar that reminded me of Gary Moore.

It's not all poignant slow blues though, 'No One To Talk To (But the Blues)' is a rocker, Tinsley Ellis's 'Dying to Do Wrong' is swampy with Mike on slide guitar, 'Darkness' by Tab Benoit is moody and atmospheric and Walter Trout's 'Nobody Moves Me Like You Do' is a real hard-hitting powerhouse blues.

Although I liked that Mike picked songs here by his contemporaries - Tinsley Ellis, Tab Benoit and Walter Trout - it's also good to hear him going back to classic blues by covering Gary Davis's 'Death Don't Have No Mercy' and this is a thoughtful and very moving version.

The production throughout is very good, as is the playing by all involved but it is Mike Zito himself who is outstanding on every track, both his superb lead guitar work and also his emotion-filled vocals. I think that making this record must have been very hard for Mike but it is a very fine achievement and he should be very proud, it is a wonderful tribute to his wife Laura, who at only 48, died way too soon.

Graham Harrison

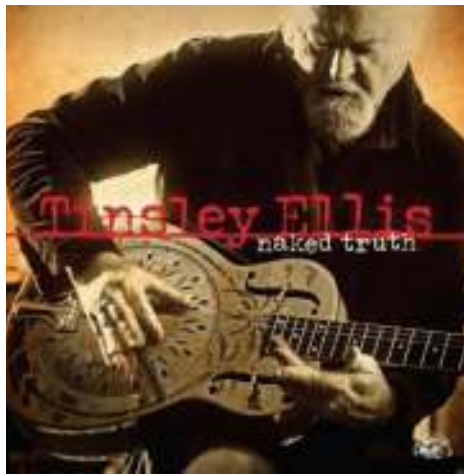


Dr. Feelgood—Live in Caen—Grand Records ASIN : B0CPLQ1NN9

I was lucky enough to see the original line up of the Feelgoods early on several times on their infrequent visits to the North West and was very impressed. However, I also liked the 2022 album 'Damn Right' by the current version of the band and this live album (also recorded in 2022) features 'Mary Ann', 'Damn Right', 'Keep It Under Cover' and 'Last Call' from that album alongside R&B perennials and Feelgood classics. The current band is Robert Kane (vocals and harp), Phil Mitchell (bass), Kevin Morris (drums) and Gordon Russell (guitar).

We kick off with the driving 'Drives Me Wild', closely followed by 'No Mo Do Yakamo' and then it's Bo Diddley's 'I Can Tell' and the aforesaid 'Mary Ann' - which sounds just fine alongside these older songs. 'She Does It Right' remains an absolute classic and this version is great with Russell's guitar closely following Wilco's original and again the recent 'Damn Right' fits right in alongside the older material and features harp from Kane. As with the original Feelgoods don't underestimate how important the rhythm section is, with such a small ensemble they need to fill out the sound and drive everything along and they certainly do this - listen to 'You Don't Love Me' which also features great guitar from Kane. We also get the band's 70s chart hits 'Back in the Night' and 'Milk and Alcohol', as well as the later 'Going Back Home' and 'Down at the Doctors' and the R&B bangers 'See You Later Alligator', 'Riot in Cell Block #9' and 'Route 66'. OK, this isn't the original band but I think that they do a great job in keeping the Dr. Feelgood sound alive and this is certainly an excellent showcase for them with their newer Feelgood-style songs fitting in seamlessly alongside Feelgood and R&B classics.

Graham Harrison



Tinsley Ellis—Naked Truth—Alligator Records ASIN : B0CM5S4BG7

Although normally an electric guitarist playing with a band, on this album Tinsley drops the band and takes up his 1937 National resonator guitar and his 1967 Martin acoustic to deliver nine original songs and covers of Son House, Willie Dixon and Leo Kottke.

We start with two originals the powerful 'Devil in the Room' with slide and echoey handclaps followed by the delicate Skip James-like 'Windowpane', then it's a blistering take on Son House's 'Death Letter Blues' with great slide guitar and equally good vocals. The Willie Dixon song is 'Don't Go No Further', as done by Muddy Waters, but it works fine with just Tinsley's vocals, guitar and foot stamps and the Kottke cover is 'The Sailor's Grave on The Prairie' a plaintive slide guitar instrumental that apparently Tinsley has been playing on and off for 50 years.

The remaining songs are all originals – the Robert Johnson-like 'Tallahassee Blues', the slow blues 'Hoochie Mama' and an up-tempo instrumental 'Alcovy Breakdown'. 'Horseshoes and Hand Grenades' is an authentic sounding delta blues and 'Grown Ass Man' is another up-tempo blues that benefits from added handclaps. The album closes with a beautiful melodic instrumental 'Easter Song'.

I only discovered Tinsley Ellis for the first time a couple of years ago and was surprised by how good he was. This album shows another side to him and I understand that he will now do a tour in the States featuring solo performances with just him and the two guitars.

Graham Harrison



Cole & Ward—Blues and Other Truths—Rawtone Records / Green Bullet Records

Mark Cole and Liam Ward are perhaps both better known on the blues circuit for their work with Sons of the Delta and the Liam Ward Band respectively. Here they come together as Cole & Ward with "Blues and Other Truths" their debut album release.

The album opens with 'Deep Blood Moon' which has a nice edgy vibe followed by 'Ma Jolie Fille' which has a much more Cajun feel with lyrics to match. 'Midnight Motorway Blues' is a driving blues (no pun intended) about a musician's life on the road, something we can all relate to with the late night closures and road diversions! 'The More You Drink...' is a light hearted look at the pitfalls of drinking alcohol with hints of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee to this one.

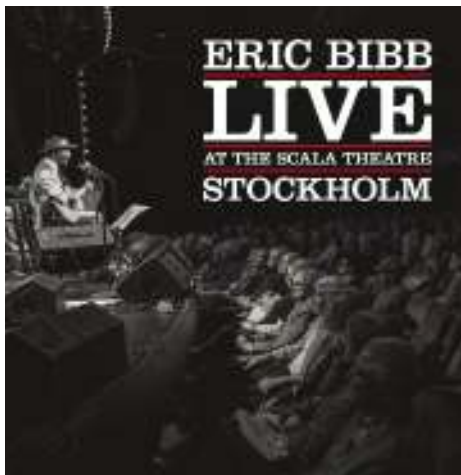
'Food Off My Table' is a bit of a jibe at the Old Etonian set whilst 'Be Still My Soul' takes us down a Gospel path. 'Weird Dream' sure lives up to its title with lots of effects thrown in for good measure and I'm sure Screamin' Jay Hawkins would be proud of this one! 'Who What Where When Why' is more of a straight up twelve bar blues.

You don't often come across a song in three four time but 'Itinerant Waltz' uses that waltz beat to conjure up a nice Cajun feel once again. It's back to that rootsy rocking blues vibe with 'Mr Big Shot' before heading off towards Doo-Wop territory with 'Darling, Please'. The album closes with 'Honey's Coming Home' which is a play on Sonny Boy Williamson's 'Bring It On Home' with some fine harmonica to match, a fitting way to end the album.

This is a fine well produced blues album. The songs are well constructed with well crafted lyrics. The vocals stand up nicely in the mix with good clear diction and the instrumentation is good throughout. You won't find any of those long overkill guitar solos here but what you will find is lots of harmonica which really makes this album stand out. At times Liam Ward sounds like Charlie Musselwhite at other times like Sugar Blue but there is no overplaying here as all the songs are nicely varied and everything fits together just right.

Here we have two fine musicians on top of their game and they work so well together. They have managed to produce a fantastic album and I strongly recommend you give this a spin.

Ged Wilson



Eric Bibb—Live At The Scala Theatre Stockholm—Stony Plain Records

Eric Bibb needs no introduction as he is an award winning blues artist known the world over and this new release is recorded live in Stockholm.

The album opens with 'Goin' Down The Road Feelin' Bad' a nice gentle tune which sets the scene for the whole album. 'Silver Spoon' gently swings and gets your foot tapping whilst 'Along The Way' to put it simply; is just a beautiful song. There is a 'Gotta Move' type vibe to 'Things Is 'Bout Comin' My Way' which features some nice harp work.

The song 'Rosewood' carries some really strong poignant lyrics and the aptly titled 'Whole World's Got The Blues' features a really tasty guitar solo from Johan Lindström. The album closes in style with Eric's arrangement of the traditional tune 'Mole In The Ground' and it's nice to hear the crowd singing along to this one.

Eric has assembled a fine band of musicians who seem to have bought into his gentle bluesy style. I liked the harmonica work of Greger Andersson which reminded me of Sonny Terry and I enjoyed Esbjörn Hazelius on fiddle who brought to mind Sugar Cane Harris.

Needless to say Eric Bibb is impeccable as a storyteller, guitarist and singer. His voice is gentle yet so emotive and he just exudes calm. This being a live album it is a great rendition of how I remember seeing him perform live. As well as the audience involvement you get a sense of live ambience that the theatre throws out which is nice. This is another great album from Eric and I'm sure you will feel completely chilled out after listening!

Ged Wilson



Sue Foley—Sue Foley Live In Austin Vol. 1—Guitar Woman Records

Sue Foley is a Canadian blues guitarist and singer. Having released many albums and won many blues music awards Sue is making her mark. This latest release “Sue Foley Live In Austin Vol. 1” as the name suggests is a live one in Texas.

The album opens with an introduction from the M.C. with the words “great looking audience in here tonight...” setting the scene. Blues riff based ‘New Used Car’ kicks things off followed by ‘Walkin’ Home’ a good old rocking twelve bar boogie. Sue cranks up a good version of Howlin’ Wolf’s (Willie Dixon), ‘Howlin’ For My Darlin’.

‘Queen Bee’ is a female perspective of the classic ‘King Bee’ whilst the instrumental ‘Hooked On Love’ owes its inspiration to Otis Rush’s ‘All Your Love’. This is followed with a nice rendition of Dylan’s ‘Positively 4th Street’. The album closes with ‘High Roller’ which has shades of ZZ Top thrown in.

Sue Foley is a great guitarist doing justice to the style of the blues greats. I can detect hints of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Peter Green amongst others in her playing. Her voice is engaging with a country tinge to it. Her band work really well together and are just the right foil for her style of delivery.

There is no mistaking this as a live album as the enthusiastic crowd really engage and show their appreciation and you get the sense that the Continental club was rocking that night. There is nothing out of the ordinary here just a good old style alive and kicking blues album to enjoy!

Ged Wilson



Bluesman Mike Francis— Stevie (Single)—Kycker Records

Bluesman Mike Francis is an award winning solo blues artist based in Liverpool England and is well known up and down the British blues circuit. Following on from his hit single ‘Lawman’s Blues’ is another single release “Stevie”.

As the song title ‘Stevie’ suggests this is an ode to Stevie Ray Vaughan and there is no denying the impact SRV has made on the world of blues so here is a fitting tribute. Mike steers clear of trying to emulate SRV but sticks to his guns and makes this his own.

There’s a real 60’s British blues boom vibe to ‘Stevie’ with the rhythm guitar chugging along nicely somewhat reminiscent of Wilko Johnson. In fact Mike’s signature twelve string electric guitar really drives this and the slide guitar solo really adds some colour. You can hear the raw energy in Mike’s voice which gives this song its intensity making it a great follow up to ‘Lawman’s Blues’ so why not go and give it a spin.

Ged Wilson



Dave Kelly—40 Years on: A Recollection—Repertoire REPUK1393

Dave Kelly was born in 1947 in Chiswick in West London. The family later moved to Streatham, South London. He started playing the guitar at the age of ten, after being influenced by Rock'n'Roll and Skiffle. He also became aware of American folk music and to some extent blues, via Lonnie Donegan.

He often played with his older sister (the late) Jo Ann Kelly. In their youth they would enter musical competitions and often win them. A place he and his sister often frequented was Dave Carey's

Swing Shop in Streatham, which specialised in jazz and blues records. There, they would listen to records and meet with friends who included Bob Hall, Steve Rye, Simon Preager and his great friend Tony McPhee. It was in fact, Tony McPhee who showed Dave how to tune his guitar to an open chord to play slide/bottleneck.

With the influences of the folk boom of the early 60's Dave started playing the 'fingerpicking' style and became a musical disciple of Fred McDowell; at that time Dave was a member of the John Dummer Blues Band and the short lived Tramp, who in their line-up included his sister Jo Ann. He would later become an original member of The Blues Band.

When, during the early sixties 'The American Folk and Blues Festivals' began to annually tour Britain, one of the many venues visited was the Fairfield Halls in Croydon, South London and artists such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Son House, Sonny Boy Williamson, Willie Dixon, Big Mama Thornton, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and John Lee Hooker to name but a very few, appeared in these shows over the years.

Also at that time, there was a folk and blues club in Croydon, where Dave and his sister would frequent, which was located at The Star Hotel in London road, Croydon. It was there, when some of these artists played in the club, that Dave continued on his musical journey, for he went on to become part of the group of musicians that became the backing band for artists such as Howlin' Wolf, Son House and John Lee Hooker, when they toured Britain.

"40 Years on: A Recollection" is a retrospective look at Dave's career from the beginning. It consists of three CDS containing 55 numbers, 23 of which have never before been released. Split into three CDs; the first concerns Dave's own compositions with two collaborations, the second is devoted to the many covers Dave has recorded and the third is a representation of his live work. The set includes a comprehensive and fascinating fact filled booklet, written by Chris Welch.

The most distinctive and alluring feature of this first CD is Dave's slide and picking. The numbers are what you would expect of that time, full bodied, energetic, British blues influenced toe-tapping guitar and piano drivers. His vocals are somewhat reminiscent of Dave Edmunds; the enticing production work is also very similar.

One of my favourites is the slide driven, pumping 'Straight Line (To My Heart)' which gets you going from the start. The country blues flavoured 'Dawn Surprise' settles you down with an irresistible slide. The straight down the line, piano and slide rocker 'Ungrateful' is very satisfying. The country swinging violin led 'Don'tcha Hang Up The Phone' is very easy on the ears, as is the wonderfully melancholically picked 'Duisburg Blues'.

The second CD delivers a splendid array of covers including Tex Comers' touching ballad, 'Tongue Tied', the country/Spanish influenced acoustic guitar hits the spot. Otis Redding's

'(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay' is a mellow, slow, thoughtful and very melancholic piece. The slowburning, desperate, atmospherically arid sounding slide on '110 In The Shade', definitely leaves you with a thirst.

The instrumental version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'Oklahoma', is delivered as a toe-tapping mixture of country and swing with a rolling and bouncing vibraphone for good measure. Guy Clarke's ballad 'Anyhow I Love You' is simply a comforting and heartfelt declaration of love. Dave displays his exquisite guitar skills on his instrumental version of Neil Diamond's 'Red Red Wine'.

The third CD contains a variety of numbers that show Dave relaxed and in his element; live. The fifteen numbers here have never been released before and are a treat to the ears.

'That Same Thing' opens and sets the tone, the hair-standing feeling starts here. Sparse, chilling slide, ringing guitar and menacing bass. A stark enticing 'I Can't Be Satisfied/ Chicago Calling' delivers crisp, ringing guitar, punching percussion and a bass you could walk on. 'Hoochie Coochie Man' prowls and here Dave delivers an eery, haunting slide. 'You Shook Me, is a fine slow burner, over six minutes long. On Son House's 'Walking Blues', Dave eloquently displays his dexterous and subtle guitar skills.

This is a very fine collection.

Seriously recommended!

Brian Harman



Dave Kelly—Sun On my Face—Repertoire REPUK1469

This is the latest album from The Dave Kelly Band. Many will remember Dave as one of the original members of The Blues Band. The album was started before COVID but, during that time Bill Gautier, whose studios were being used to record the album, had moved home from South West London to the Kent Coast, thus closing his studio. The album was later re-started and finished with keyboard player and engineer Rob Millis, who owns the Left Bank Studios, on the bank of the River Crane in Twickenham.

In the studio with Dave who takes lead vocals and plays acoustic, electric and slide guitars are, Rob Millis and Lou Stonebridge on keyboards, Rob Millis and Homer Kelly-Tarrant (Dave's son), bass and Sam M. Kelly (Dave's son) drums and percussion, Steve Simpson, violin, Doug Cox, dobro, Paul Jones, harmonica and Pete Emery, guitar.

The fifteen numbers here, range from old classics to fresh originals. The album opens, with a very engaging piano and organ led, rolling version of Cole Porter's 'Let's Do It, Let's Fall In Love'. Dave's warming vocals and equally warm slide entice you in. A delightful, version of Dobie Gray's 'Lovin' Arms', is led by a very emotion filled slide with suitably enticing guitar and organ underpinning it all.

'Sun On My Face', originated from a collaboration between Dave and a musician friend Marcus Wagstaff. It is a lovely and engaging violin-led tale of love, sun and freedom. The piano and organ-led Ray Charles classic 'Georgia On My Mind', is filled with warmth, love and sweet affectionate memories. Arthur Crudup's 'Mean Ole' Frisco Blues' is a wonderful rolling piece, with Paul Jones on evocative harmonica and Dave's enticing acoustic guitar both suitably

underpinned with pummelling percussion. 'Too Happy To Write' is a suitably jolly tale explaining that, it is mainly despair and failure that incite you to write. I think, he may well be right.

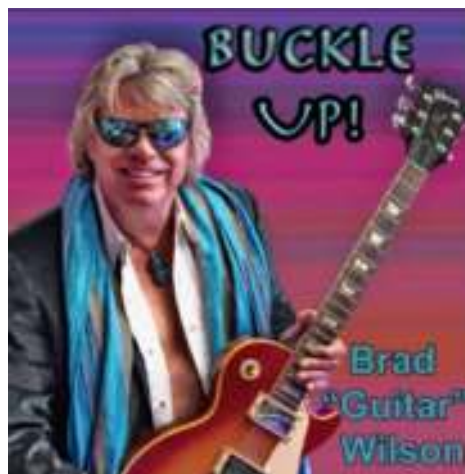
'A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square' was the favourite song of his parents and this emotive acoustic piece, is a tribute to them, no more to be said. 'From My Ass in Lagrasse', is a laid back view of life in the funk style of Ian Dury perhaps? The traditional folk number 'Tramps And Hawkers' is in tribute to Dave's youth, when he and friends used to hitch-hike in and around Scotland; a stirring and thoughtful piece.

'Them Old Crossroads Blues', is splendid acoustic, low key autobiographical blues of Dave's early life and friends, such as Son House and his great friend and mentor Tony McPhee and of course, how to play The Blues! 'My Girl' is a feature of Dave's live set and here he plays his own emotion filled version, splendid! A surprise, is John Denver's 'Take Me Home Country Roads'. Here, Dave invokes in it a beautifully slow country blues feel.

On Memphis Minnie's sweetly mellow, 'Ain't Nothin' In Ramblin' (a favourite of Dave's sister Jo Ann) Pete Emery is a featured guitarist here, just as he was when he played with Jo Ann, all those years ago. 'I Am The Blues' is quite simply, a smoky, slowburning evocative tale of the Blues and what it is! And if you get it, what it does and how it makes you feel!

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Brad "Guitar" Wilson—Buckle Up!—Cali Bee Music

This is the seventh album from west coast blues rocker Brad and he chose to travel to The Netherlands to record the album at The Wisseloord Studios in Hilversum. Upon his return to California; he decided to go into The Musicians Institute in Hollywood for a further session of recordings. The album was produced and mixed by Francis Buckley.

The album consists of nine original numbers and four covers. Joining Brad (guitars and lead vocals) in the studios are Adam Gust and Johan Van den Burgh, drums, Brian Beal and Deb Jacobs, bass, Chris Rhyne, piano and organ, Frankie V Bluesorgan, organ, Francis Buckley, percussion and Su Isaac and Galen Keith on backing vocals.

The album opens with Brads' original, 'Lucille', which is a lovely rocking, roller with a very appealing, understated insistent guitar throughout. A splendidly relaxed and inviting version of the Stones 'You Can't Always Get What You Want' features the soul filled vocals from Deb Jacobs that are greatly underpinned by some very tasty grooving guitar. Tabby Thomas's 'Hoodoo Party' contains a lovely loose,, southern rolling feel, courtesy of Brads' understated ringing guitar.

'Hound Dog', is an enticing, slow burning shuffle, led by an enjoyably, lazy pairing of piano and guitar. The toe tapping 'Buckle Up' is most definitely in strutting, swinging, Rolling Stones territory, nice! The classic 'Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out', is a slow burning ballad underpinned by a very affectingly crisp piano and an understated crying guitar. Brad moves into familiar territory with the inviting, hard rocking, 'Voodoo Boogie'. Francis Buckley's richly picked slow burning 'My Own Hill To Climb', allows Brad the room to be expansive yet subtle in his dramatic emotion filled guitar work.

'Cast Your Shadow' is an enticing, grooving roller. The number, once again allows Brad to display his considerably entertaining guitar work. 'Sky Full Of Rain', returns us to a despair filled, weary world. His inviting slow burning, tear laden guitar work impresses. The Albert King classic 'Born Under A Bad Sign' is splendidly re-worked as a duet between Deb Jacobs and Brad. 'West Coast Girl'—the title says it all—pleasant ringing acoustic guitar and breezy electric guitar and organ, nonetheless enjoyable though. 'Step By Step' is splendid harmonica led, blues shuffle with a suitably tough guitar to top it off. 'Hit It', is a pleasant soul fuelled guitar filled shuffle with punchy horns in all the right places.

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Jennifer Porter—Yes, I Do—Cougar Moon Music CMM009

Jennifer is from Buxton, Maine. She, originally trained as an opera singer and classical pianist but expanded her talents to include becoming a trained jazz vocalist and pianist. Also, she is an accomplished actor and song writer in her own right. During her career she has performed with classical and jazz orchestras, including the world-famous Glenn Miller Orchestra. Even though Jennifer possesses these many qualities, she still considers herself to be Roots Musician at heart.

Six of the eight numbers on this, her ninth album, were written by Jennifer. Jennifer is on lead vocals, piano, Wurlitzer and Hammond B3. She was joined, in the various studios that the album was recorded in, by Dana Packard and Jonathan Truman, drums and percussion, Damon Banks, bass, George Naha and Vinnie Raniolo, guitar, Steve Jankowsk, trumpets and flugelhorn, Doug DeHays, tenor and baritone saxophones and clarinet, Randy Andos, trombone and tuba. Featured guests are Cindy Cashdollar and C.J. Chenier.

The album opens with 'Before We Call It A Day'. Jennifer's invitingly smooth warming vocal, effortlessly glides above the seriously raucous rolling, jazz fuelled piano, backed with swinging, surging horns. 'Yes, I Do' is a slower slice of Memphis Soul, that features a very mellow, Hammond B3 floating under soft and enticing vocals with the timely horns slowly, sympathetically rising. The gentle and haunting ballad, 'Over You' has an ephemerally bubbling B3, underpinning the sad emotion-filled reminiscences of a not forgotten past romance. The jaunty accordion courtesy of C.J. Chenier on 'All I Needed Was You' leads this Cajun influenced floor duster. The inviting and swinging vocals are suitably backed by piano, horns and guitar.

A New Orleans influenced martial beat leads 'Don't Worry No More', while a sinuously snaking pedal steel guitar from Cindy Cashdollar rises with subdued horns underpinning it all. Leroy Carr's 'How Long', has smoky, lonesome, slow burning horns, combined with sad, mellow piano and B3, under an equally sad and mellow vocal. 'Lucky Dust (Shining Through)' is given a slightly New Orleans jazz feel, with a splendid clarinet from Doug DeHays. This rolls along nicely in a jaunty mood, while the sweet and inviting vocal brings you along. Stuart Balcom and Bessie Smith's 'Good Ol' Wagon', is quite simply, a delightful piano—and Randy Andos tuba—led, gentle-rolling tale, of an older man "getting the elbow" from his former lover.

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Seth James—Lessons—Qualified Records

Seth was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and grew up on a working ranch in West Texas. His grandfather was a known honky tonk piano player in the Texas clubs of the 40's and 50's, while his father played his gold sparkle Slingerland drums across the Lone Star State. He was given a Gibson Southern Jumbo guitar, by his father and got a few lessons from him to go with it. From this point on Seth was set on his career in music.

Seth began to teach himself how to play the guitar by listening to artists such as Lightnin' Hopkins, Freddie King and Creedence Clearwater Revival. When, in 1996, he obtained a Fender Stratocaster, he became more than aware of the potential of an electrified guitar.

Being a long time devotee of the music of Delbert McClinton, it was only a matter of time before he delved into Delbert's catalogue and delivered a musical collection of tunes from his hero's vast catalogue of music. To bring his tribute to fruition he called upon the services of Kevin McKendree, who is not only a fine keyboard player and guitarist but also a celebrated producer, songwriter and engineer, who also worked with Delbert for over 25 years.

James & McKendree invited an all-star band for the recording sessions, to The Rock House studios, Franklin, Tennessee. Artists included were Lynn Williams, drums, Steve Mackey, bass, and Rob McNelley on guitar. The horn section is Vinnie Ciesielski, trumpet, John Hinchey, trombone and Jim Hoke, saxophones with Nick Jay and Alice Spencer providing backing vocals.

The proceedings begin with a solemn, short, spoken-word rendition of 'The Glamour of Life', and then the music rips into 'Honky Tonkin. (I Guess I Done Me Some)' which has a blasting intro of scorching organ and rising horns and then settles into an easygoing, almost funky, "Honky Tonk", groove.

If, there is such an expression as "an unapologetic, enjoyably hangdog "it wasn't my fault", vocal", then Seth certainly has it.

'Real Good Itch' has an enticing, goodtime blues twanging guitar feel throughout, with laid back piano and a lovely slapping percussion. 'Who's Fooling Who' is an enjoyable loose soul fuelled, funky groover with slowly smoking organ and a lazy guitar entices. The trampling, loose limbed inviting blues horns of 'Maybe, Someday Baby' rolls along, as the laidback guitar and piano strolls on. On the haunting, 'The Rub' the mellow organ and guitar, slowly roll on like "tumbleweed" as a messy tale of murder unfolds.

'Morgan City Fool' is another fine example of sordid tales of murder, delivered as an easygoing, swamp sticky, southern foot-tapper. The swinging percussion, rolling piano and twanging guitar on 'Victim Of Life's Circumstances', delivers another enjoyably jolly tale of murder and mayhem. Sweet, rising soulful-horns drive 'Lesson In The Pain Of Love', while an enticingly slow piano and grooving funky guitar ride along. The toe tapping 'Ruby Louise' is a splendid horn-driven, soul infused piano roller. As is, 'B Movie Boxcar', but on a much grander scale, the blasting horns, ending solos could well be a tribute to "The Blues Brothers". The slowburning organ and piano led ballad 'Take It Easy, displays a vocal, which is full of remorse, disappointment, pain and honesty.

Recommended!

Brian Harman

**BLIND RACCOON
and NOLA BLUE**
COLLECTION VOLUME 6



The Blind Raccoon and NOLA Blue Collection Vol. 6—Blue Heart Records BHR 059

This is the sixth welcome collaboration between Betsie Brown's Blind Raccoon Promotions and the record labels Nola Blue Records and Blue Heart Records. Once again, the fifteen numbers here are a mixture of album and unreleased tracks, previously released singles and firm fan favourites.

The opener is the enticing, gospel infused 'Ballad of Pat Hare', (O'Hare himself, was an original 1950s bluesman) from Londoner Oliver "Mississippi" McDonald, whose rasping soulful, southern vocal, well suits this hand clapped toe tapper. Shawn Amos

adds harmonica and vocals.

'Tidal Wave', is a very soothing, jazz influenced piano and Hammond B3 instrumental from Anthony Geraci. The gorgeously rocking, acoustic guitar driven 'My Baby Loves Me Like a Hurricane' from the late Kip London is simply delightful.

'Survival' from harmonica player, Douglas Avery (who, by the way, is an honorary member of The Doors) delivers a wonderfully melancholy bass-driven piece, complete with an equally, melancholy Doors like guitar (from Franck L. Goldwasser). Deathly enticing!

Teresa James recites an interesting list of things to do on 'I Do My Drinkin' on the Weekend'. It is very informative and full of lively rolling "Honky Tonkin" piano and country rocking guitar while, over the top, Teresa delivers a bouncy, cheerfully whimsical vocal.

Vocalist Ange Kogutz and guitarist Anson Funderburgh join The Texas Horns on the crisp and lively R&B funkier 'Never Buy My Soul' to deliver a richly splendid floor duster.

On 'Smoke My Peace Pipe (Smoke It Right)' or alternatively titled 'A Tribute to Big Chief Bo Dollis', Benny Turner, delivers a warmly affectionate and rumbustious tribute to Big Chief Bo Dollis', who was the leader of The Wild Magnolias who upheld the traditions of Indian masking and often performed New Orleans Mardi Gras music. Another number delivering delicious New Orleans rhythms, is from keyboard player Dave Keyes, who works his magic on the joyously hip-loosening number entitled 'Pookie Po Po'.

The guitar and organ led 'Man Goes Blind', is a thoughtful, conscience driven, tough blues from guitar player Trevor Power, concerning the indifference to life all around him and the question "why?"

The melancholic, piano and slide-guitar, emotion stirring ballad 'Forever Blue, from Terry Wilson-Slessor, concerns less than favourable memories of a failed love affair.

The downbeat, disheartening chromatic harmonica on the blues filled 'Struck Out Again' from Big Harp George (George Bisharat) satisfyingly punctuates a mournful saxophone as he tells his tale of woe. This number is an unreleased track from his 2018 album 'Uptown Cool',

The Betty James and Clarence Edward Johnson R&B gem, 'I'm a Little Mixed Up' is given a splendidly languid feel by Steve Howell and the Mighty Men. This, is from his forthcoming new album '99½ Won't Do'.

'She Might Meet Me' is a loose, grooving and enticing jazz-fuelled, relaxing guitar piece from Kenny Parker. This live recording, was originally released as a single in 1999.

Blind Lemon Pledge (James Byfield) gives a wonderful, acoustically compelling performance on the classic 'House of the Rising Sun'. This number is from his forthcoming album, 'Oh So Good'.

The Reverend Freakchild ends the album with another striking and tautly played acoustic piece with the eerie 'Don't Miss Nothing 'til It's Gone'. Towards the end, The Reverend Shawn Amos eloquently chimes in, with harmonica and backing vocals.

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Rick Vito—Cadillac Man—Blue Heart Records BHR-062

Richard Francis Vito was born on October 13th 1949 in Darby, Pennsylvania; his professional career began in 1971, shortly after moving to Los Angeles, where he met and joined Delaney & Bonnie & Friend. He has also, worked with Todd Rundgren and Derek & The Dominoes' Bobby Whitlock. He became part of Fleetwood Mac in 1987 and stayed with them until 1991. During this time he replaced lead guitarist Lindsey Buckingham. He is noted for his blues and slide guitar style, his influences include Elmore James, Robert Nighthawk, and B.B. King.

He played the slide guitar solo on the Bob Seger song (and Chevy truck TV commercial), 'Like a Rock'. He had been a member of Bonnie Raitt's touring band in the 1980s and 1990s. In the past, he has also worked with other artists such as; John Mayall, Jackson Browne, Little Richard, Roger McGuinn, Roy Orbison, Dobie Gray, John Fogerty, Stevie Nicks, Albert Collins, Dolly Parton, Maria Muldaur and Bob Seger.

This album of 12 numbers includes only one cover, the others are original compositions from Rick and it will also be his 12th solo release. He takes lead vocals and guitar, acoustic guitar and electric bass. In the studio with him are Jim Hoke, saxophones, Lynn Williams, Rick Reed and Charles "Mojo" Johnson, drums, Kevin McKendree; Hammond B3, Steve Mariner, harmonica and Charlie Harrison, bass.

The opener is 'Love Crazy Baby', a lovely, lazy slide driven shuffler, with comforting drum work underpinned by an equally lazy and enticing saxophone.

Next up is 'It's Two AM'. This, is an old number of Vito's from about ten years ago. It was recorded by Shemekia Copeland and won the 2001 W.C. Handy Blues Award for song of the year. Here, it is a driving rocker—with suitably ringing slide—while the simmering Hammond and punching percussion underpin it all. The driving, saxophone swinging, foot tapping 'Cadillac Man' definitely has the enticing, influencing undertones of a certain Mr. C. Berry.

The gentle shuffle 'Little Sheba' is encased in a shimmering and echoing percussion with an eastern flavour, as is the prowling harmonica in the background, while to the fore is an enticing sitar-influenced slow slide guitar. The jungle-nightlife sounds and a distinct Bo Diddley beat on 'Bo In Paradise' allows Rick to deliver a soothing, almost Hawaiian slide. Splendid!

'Gone Like A Cool Breeze' is in praise of the Cadillac car and it is delivered in a joyful swinging Louis Jordan style. A change of mood is set with 'Crying At Midnight' a haunting slow burner, filled with plenty of dreamy melancholic slide. 'Barbeque'n Baby', is a lovely little toe tapper, with plenty of creamy slide to entice.

Sam Cooke's gospel influenced 'Just Another Day' is, quite simply, a delightful heartfelt emotion stirring, slide instrumental. While, 'River's Calling' is a haunting, slow burning mixture of emotive slide and vocals, encased in quietly shimmering percussion. 'You Can't Stop A Guitar (From Playing The Blues)' can only be described as a grooving, slide filled rocking ode to the blues. The evocative, instrumental 'Sliding Into The Blues' is a delicate, almost serene, dreamy slow burning ode to the blues-slide!

Recommended!

Brian Harman



Breakin' News—Ten Years of Blues—Nola Records NB025

It has been ten years since the inception of the blues label NOLA Blue, a label that has focused on overlooked, underappreciated and possibly forgotten artists but this compilation changes all of that. Here is some of the most satisfying music around today and our yesterdays.

The opener is 'Breakin' News' from Benny Turner. This is a fine blues shuffle that first appeared on his "Journey" album from 2014. The rich voice of Benny is backed by a splendidly soulful horn section. Cash McCall joins Benny on 'It Hurts Me Too', from the album "Going Back Home" which they recorded in 2019.

This number is a splendid emotional slowburning harmonica and slide led blues.

'All My Dues Are Paid' is from Frank Bey's 2020 album of the same name. Frank's richly smooth soulful vocals are splendidly backed by Kid Andersen on guitar and keyboards.

Cash McCall's 2020 single, 'One Who's Got A Lot' is a lovely slow shuffle, with some very comfortable guitar and piano.

'If Only We Could' was a single released by Clarence Spady in 2022, featuring a sparkling guitar from Clarence and singeing Hammond B3 from Dave Archer.

'Golden Girl Blues' is a single from Trudy Lynn's 2022 album "Golden Girl". This grooving shuffle delivers not only a splendid vocal from Trudy but also features subtly enticing horns, guitar and organ.

'After All', from The Love Light Orchestra's album 'Leave the Light On', is a delightfully enticing horn-soaked ballad with a sumptuously, silky vocal from John Németh, which is quite sublime.

John features again on the joyously raucous gospel-influenced blues of 'The Last Time', from his 2022 album, 'May Be The Last Time'. The infectious harmonica draws you in, along with John's raw vocal.

Lil' Jimmy Reed and young pianist Ben Levin recorded an album entitled "Back To Baton Rouge". Here is the autobiographical number, 'They Call Me Lil' Jimmy' recalling upon how he became known as "Lil' Jimmy Reed". It is a simple but, affecting, raw slow-guitar and piano blues. Splendid.

'Who Sang It First' from Benny Turner, is a fine respectful, slow burning gospel infused number, with a restrained vocal from Benny. The equally restrained organ and Wurlitzer work is from Clayton Ivey, Wurlitzer and Joe Krown, organ. This was released as a single in 2019.

Recommended!

Brian Harman



It is election year in the USA of course, and New Orleans based singer, harmonica player, and songwriter Smoky leaves listeners in no doubt just where his vote will be going. Tracks like 'Liars, Cheaters, And Losers' and '99% Blues' might indicate that Smoky would probably not be a great friend of Donald Trump.

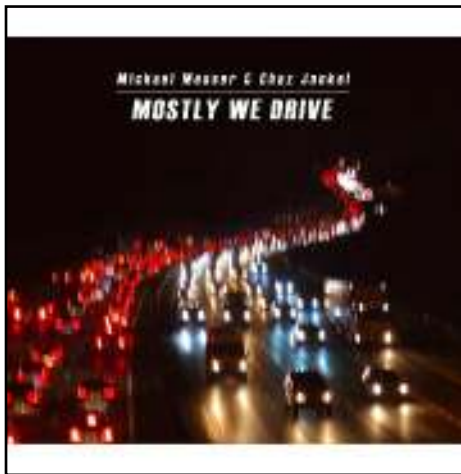
So yes, this is a fiercely political set, whether directly aimed at Republicans or more generally the state of the USA as on the closing 'Homeless Christmas'. But Smoky also offers solutions with numbers like the fine shuffle of 'Get Out And Vote' and a strong

cover of Wilbert Harrison's 'Let's Work Together'.

Musically Smoky is firmly in blues territory whether evoking Jimmy Reed as on 'Between Iraq And A Hard Place' or boogying in classic Canned Heat style on the nearly nine minutes of 'Common Ground'. Then there is the jump Texas blues shuffle of '99% Blues', with the vocals appropriately enough shared (democratically enough, of course!) among eight singers. Some fine musicians also provide the backing throughout, including keyboards player Johnny Neel, who helped co-write many of these songs.

I enjoyed this a lot. Hey Smoky, how about a cover of Bobo Jenkins' 'Democrat Man'?

Norman Darwen



Michael Messer & Chaz Jankel—Mostly We Drive— Knife Edge

www.michaelmesser.co.uk

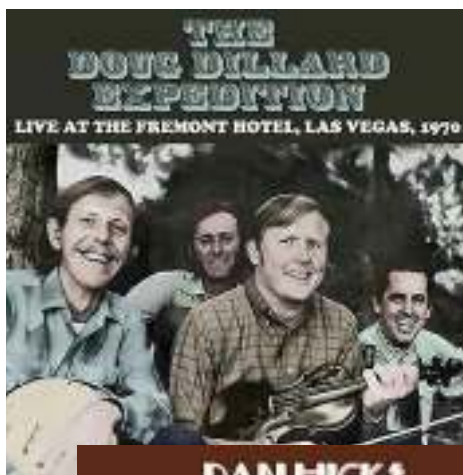
Slide guitar maestro Michael Messer and multi-instrumentalist Chaz Jankel have been friends for over four decades, though musically they went in different directions. Michael – here on vocals and various guitars – ostensibly in a blues direction, albeit one that included a lot of world music influences (he was in the past sometimes compared favourably to Ry Cooder) whilst Chaz was most notably guitarist and keyboards player for new wave legends Ian Dury & The Blockheads. His enthusiasm for the music of

Sly & The Family Stone was the reason much of their music has a strong funk feel.

Michael doesn't really do straight blues covers, but listen to a track like 'Slow Down Billy', an original with a relentless slide guitar driven groove with strong echoes of vintage Bukka White. The title track has shades of blues, Hawaiian music, gospel and country maybe, but stylistically the album ranges across to the mellow, almost ambient instrumental of 'Arcadia', and the rap influenced recitation of 'Music Brings Us Close Together'. Michael finishes the set with a Robert Johnson-esque 'Time Well Spent', the most conventional blues number here.

Holding this all together throughout though is Michael's slide guitar – and the blues – and he is able to employ numerous approaches. Certainly, in Chaz, Michael Messer seems to have found a very fine foil and a kindred spirit – this very pleasing release works extremely well indeed.

Norman Darwen

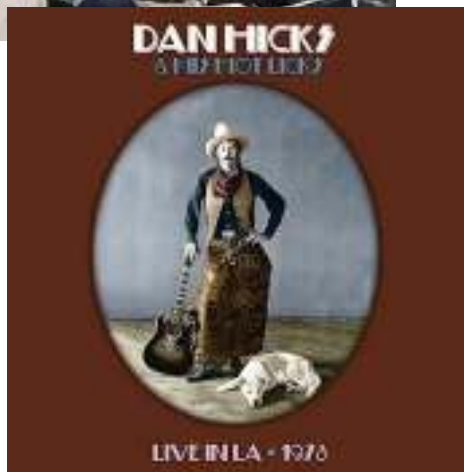


The Doug Dillard Expedition—Live at the Fremont Hotel, Las Vegas 1970— Floating World Floatm6446

Dan Hicks & His Hot Licks—Live in LA 1973 —Floating World Floatm6444

Neither of these sets is a blues release, but stay with me. Both certainly fall into the cracks between folk, Americana and roots-rock.

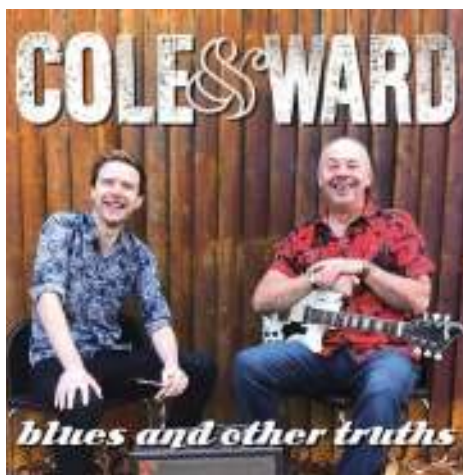
The Dillard family was a family bluegrass band appearing regularly on 60s U.S. television. Doug himself was a banjo player/singer with a very strong traditional influence (though he'd recently been pioneering country-rock when this was recorded) and there are numerous bluegrass staples present, mixing tradition, innovation and huge musical skill. There are also bluesy items like 'Take A Whiff On Me', a rural rag ('Bugle Call Rag'), and a very enjoyable cover of 'Cumberland Gap'. Doug is backed very impressively by fiddler Byron Berline, (who also worked with bluegrass king Bill Monroe), Roger Bush on bass and vocals, and Arkansas-born Billy Ray Latham on guitar and vocals, and the music is rootsy, energetic and very listenable throughout.



Dan Hicks and his band take a slightly different approach, specialising in a wide variety of styles including blues, western swing, country-jazz and vintage pop, all gathered under the umbrella title of "hot rhythm" as the notes call it, or "folk swing" as Dan himself defined it. With violin and female singers besides Dan's own vocals and guitar, another guitarist, and bass player Jaime Leopold, this is a very individual sound, from around the time Glam-rock was emerging – but you'd never know that. The second half of the CD contains material from 2009, but the sound is remarkably consistent.

Do investigate both if you're interested. Rootsy and great listening!

Norman Darwen



Cole & Ward—Blues and Other Truths—Rawtone/ Green Bullet RTRGBR2401

(www.markcolemusic.com) (www.liamwardmusic.com)

Cole & Ward brings together Mark Cole, known to some from Sons Of The Delta, on guitars and other things with strings, Cajun accordion and various other instruments whilst Liam Ward is best known as a harmonica player, band leader and multi-instrumentalist with The Jake Leg Jug Band. Both men sing.

The CD title is accurate: as I type this, 'Ma Jolie Fille' is playing – this piece of attractive zydeco sounds like it should be credited as "traditional" but in fact, like every other track here, it's an original. The set opens with a slightly spooky 'Deep Blood Moon', whilst 'Midnight Motorway Blues' is a tough band blues about life on the road and 'Food Off My Table' is a strong political blues riding a strong arrangement.

In contrast, 'The More You Drink...' is a sprightly knockabout tune that sounds like it should come from the Jake Leg Jug Band, and 'Weird Dream' is er, weird (and Liam gets to play musical saw). 'Be Still My Soul' borrows from down-home gospel whilst 'Itinerant Waltz' has a Celtic type melody, underlined by Liam's harp playing.

Then it is back to the blues with the powerful boogie and pointed lyrics of 'Mr Big Shot' and the final, strongly Sonny Boy Williamson No 2 (Rice Miller) inflected 'Honey's Coming Home' (with some excellent duet harp work). In between these two is a fine vintage R'n'B flavoured ballad 'Darling, Please'. In short then, a very fine set all round...

Norman Darwen



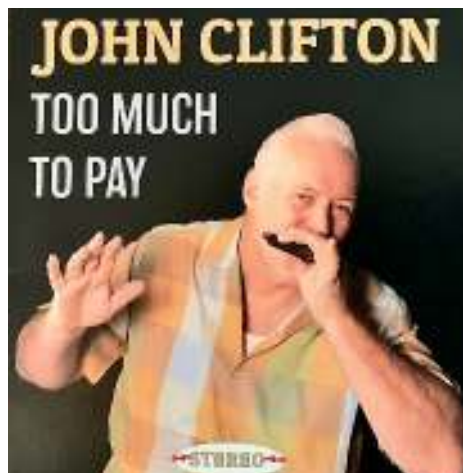
Phil Coyne & the Wayward Aces—Sound and Fury—Independent

(www.waywardaces.com)

Three guys with a very tough blues sound – Phil is the leader on harp and vocals, with Oscar LaDell on electric guitar and drummer Will Harris powering things along. There are six songs to this set, running to twenty-five minutes. A couple of covers exemplify their approach: the penultimate track, Ray Charles' 'Blackjack', has a more subtle feel than the other tracks, which are perhaps best typified by the five plus minutes of the raw version of Howling Wolf's 'How Many More Years'. It is close – but not *too* close – to the original and a real stomping performance, with a good vocal from Phil.

The remaining songs are originals. The opener, 'Brother' has a flavour of downhome Mississippi in the early 50s, a tinge of Canned Heat boogie, and a helping of the Hill Country sound. 'I'm Gone' is also mid-to-fast paced, with just the slightest tinge of early rock and roll, then things slow for the attitude-laden 'FU Blues'. This rather enjoyable CD EP draws to an end with a reasonably quiet 'Sweet Little Riff', though one which still sounds down-home.

Norman Darwen



John Clifton—Too Much to Pay—Flower FDC 077

(www.johnclifton.com)

This is a truly international effort from veteran California harmonica player and singer John Clifton. The album itself was recorded when John was on tour in Poland, with local four-piece band The Boogie Boys, who have also backed him on previous tours. The tapes were then taken back to The States, where there was a little overdubbing and the album was mixed, before the final mastering took place back in Poland. The results do definitely merit all this care and attention.

John has had some health problems a few years back but it doesn't show here. This is a rocking California styled blues set through and through, with John's warm voice and excellent harmonica playing tackling an attractive package of songs backed by some top-notch musicians. Bartek Szopinski shines on Hammond organ and piano, guitarist Piotr Bienkiewicz impresses on guitar and the rhythm section of Janusz Brezinski on bass and drummer

Molosz Szulkowski really kicks things along. The US contingent adds some backing vocals, hand-clapping and in Chopper Wilson's case, guitar.

Overall, the set includes Chicago blues and rocking R'n'B filtered through the Golden State approach. The opener has a strong soul tinge and lyrics about an unfaithful woman and is followed by a fine vintage R'n'B ballad performance in 'It Wouldn't Stop Raining'. There are tough blues and rockers ('Get Lost' is a great example of the latter) and some just hit great grooves – try the vaguely Howling Wolf-ish 'The Problem'.

In truth though, there's not a track here that isn't (at least) well worth a listen. A very fine set all round.

Norman Darwen



Kirk Nelson & Jambalaya West—Savor the Moment—Independent

(www.kirknelsonmusic.com)

2021's album, "Lagniappe", the predecessor to this release, was very successful for these guys, and this set keeps the New Orleans flavour, as you might expect from the band name. Los Angeles-based Kirk himself sings and plays piano, Hammond organ, banjo and guitar, and he is ably backed by the band – some lovely horns too – and some hand-picked guests too. Each track is different and shows a strong attention to detail.

Kirk draws here on all his experience playing with the likes of The Neville Brothers, Buddy Guy, Bo Diddley and many others. The dozen tracks range across musical styles from funky soul reminiscent of the sound of the late 70s and beyond, through the blues and R'n'B, and on to jazz standards, with the horns certainly playing their part on 'Basin Street Blues' (originally from 1928), the closing 'I'm Beginning To See The Light' (from 1944) and the original composition 'Turn Yourself In'.

As you'd expect from a New Orleans based set—even if Kirk's personal roots do lie in the mid-west rather than Louisiana—this is a fine upbeat set. Here's one to kick off your next N'Awlins party...

Norman Darwen



JJ Gray and Mofro—Olustee—Alligator Records ASIN : B0CLNP2C4G

It's been nine years since the last JJ Gray and Mofro's last album "Ol' Glory" and this new one starts with a plaintive, melodic ballad 'The Sea' complete with syrupy strings, then 'Top of the World' picks up the pace and is harder hitting. And this is the format for the rest of the album—a slower, gentle song followed by a faster, harder song —'On a Breeze' is semi-acoustic with slide guitar and strings while the title song is funky with biting

guitar and harmonica. John Anderson's ecological song 'Seminole Wind' begins with simple piano and the track gradually builds adding backing vocals and brass and the brass stays for 'Wonderland'—a real high-energy banger with JJ's shouted vocals—it reminded me of classic Ike and Tina Turner.

'Starry Night', 'Waiting' and the closer 'Deeper than Belief' are all ballads, 'Starry Night' is tender, while 'Waiting' is a real heartfelt old skool soul-ballad and 'Deeper Than Belief' is jazzy with flute and strings. In between we get 'Free High' another blaster with riffing brass and slashing guitar and 'Rooster' is a chicken-pickin' funky song with brass, backing vocals and thundering bass.

As well as his excellent vocals throughout JJ Gray also plays guitar, dobro, keyboards and harmonica, while Mofro consists of Eric Brigmond (keyboards), Pete Winders (guitar), Dennis Marion, Marcus Parsley and John Reid (trumpet), Quinn Carson (trombone), Kenny Hamilton (saxophone/flute), Todd Smallie (bass) and Craig Burnett (drums).

Graham Harrison



Taj Mahal Sextet—Live At The Church At Tulsa—Lightning Rod Records (CD and Vinyl LP)

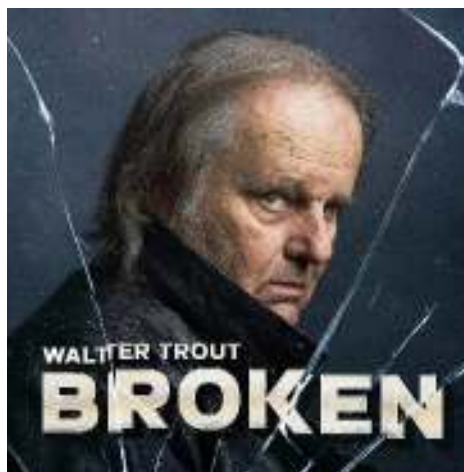
I had the huge pleasure of seeing Henry St. Claire Fredericks Jr. (*aka* Taj Mahal) in a nightclub in Texas. The show still lives with me as one of my abiding musical memories. That was close to 40 years ago and at the age of 81, he is STILL at the top of his form. As then he wields with huge skill a wide range of instruments, guitar, piano, banjo, harmonica, and many other gizmos.

Never fearful of musical adventures (his last album "Savoy" was jazz based) here he returns to his roots and with a six-piece band, sounding remarkably like the Phantom Blues Band that played with him in the 1980s —bassist Bill Rich, drummer Kester Smith, and guitarist/Hawaiian lap steel player Bobby Ingano - augmented by dobro player Rob Ickes and guitarist and vocalist Trey Hensley.

The tracks are a wonderful mix of Mahal's own music and that of others: 'Betty and Dupree' (Chuck Willis) - 'Mailbox Blues' (Mahal) - 'Queen Bee' (Mahal) - 'Lovin' in My Baby's Eyes' (Mahal) - 'Waiting for My Papa to Come Home' (Mahal) - 'Slow Drag' (Mahal) instrumental - 'Sitting On Top of the World' (Chester Burnett) - 'Twilight in Hawaii' (David Keli'i) - 'Corrina' (Jesse Edwin Davis III and Mahal) - 'Mean Old World' (Aaron Walker and Marl Young) and it is stunningly good.

Forty years fall away and it is like being back in "The Caravan Of Dreams" in Fort Worth again. Wonderful. This (in March) may be my record of the year.

Ian K McKenzie



Walter Trout—Broken—Provogue

I am really in two minds about this album. Walter Trout has a back catalogue and history practically second to no other contemporary musician. His run-in with imminent death and the drama of his liver transplant have elevated him to an almost mythical level. He is a master of his craft and has the most wonderful touch and tone in his axework. This album is a searing cry for something which remains unidentified: Redemption? Forgiveness? Release? Who knows?

The production and artistry on show here are exemplary and the inclusion of Beth Hart, Will Wilde and Twisted Sister front man Dee Snider is inspired and their contributions (particularly Wilde's) are superlative too. But, and here it comes—throughout the first and second listenings to the album, I just kept wondering “What does this have to do with the blues?”

Walter knows his blues and would not have spent so many years with Mr Mayall were it not so. But with the possible single exception of ‘Bleed’ which is said to be Hooker style boogie and does, without a doubt drive along, the rest of the music is blues in only the loosest sense.

No, the emphasis is on the rock end of the definition. Now don't get me wrong, there is nothing *per se* wrong with that but, isn't it about time we stopped tying this stuff to the blues?

Outstanding as the musicianship and vocal deliveries are, this ain't the blues. To be sure a song like ‘Turn and Walk Away’ has echoes of the kind of rural music espoused by “Oh, Brother Where Art Thou?” T-Bone Burnett would love it. But that ain't the blues either!

Ian K. McKenzie



Canned Heat—Finyl Vinyl—Ruf RF 20951 (LP and CD)

Close to sixty years after they were founded, Canned Heat, still with their founder drummer Fito de la Parra went into the studio to make this album which may (OR MAY NOT) be their swan song.

The band bring their current line-up, i.e. guitarist, keyboard player and singer Jimmy Vivino, harpman and singer Dale Spalding and Richard "Rick" Reed on bass and add a few guests to the mix and bring us (YES) B-L-U-E-S, with a vengeance. Guests include the ubiquitous Mr Bonnamassa and the exemplary Dave Alvin as guitarist and singer.

There is much to savour here, including six new songs (three each) from Jimmy Vivino and Dale Spalding.

The opener on the album is Vivino's ‘One Last Boogie’, but is it? The Canned Heat boogie beat is to the fore and this is the blues!

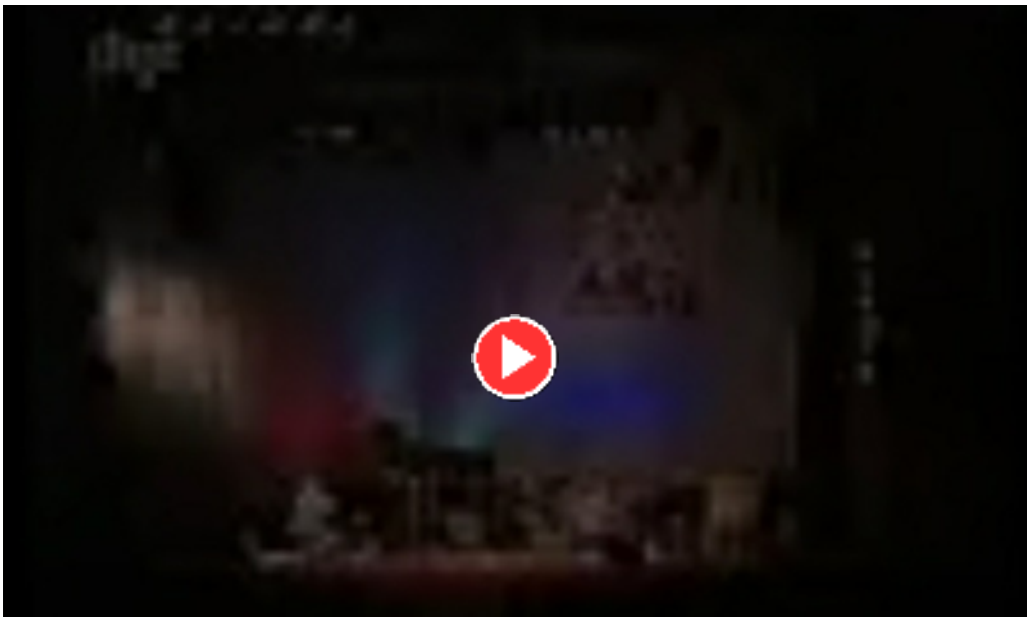
Ian K McKenzie



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[ABB] Average Blues Band: I Do These Things For You



Michel Petrucciani: Round Midnight



The Angelic Gospel Singers - If You Can't Help Me (At the Finishing Line)

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