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Bits

FEBRUARY 2022

Issue #418

BLUES IN THE SOUTH

INTERVIEW WITH
TINSLEY ELLIS

LAWRENCE LEBO'S
COLUMN - SEAN
ARDOIN

INTERVIEW WITH
CATHY PONTON
KING

CD REVIEWS

VIDEOS

GIG GUIDE

Tinsley Ellis

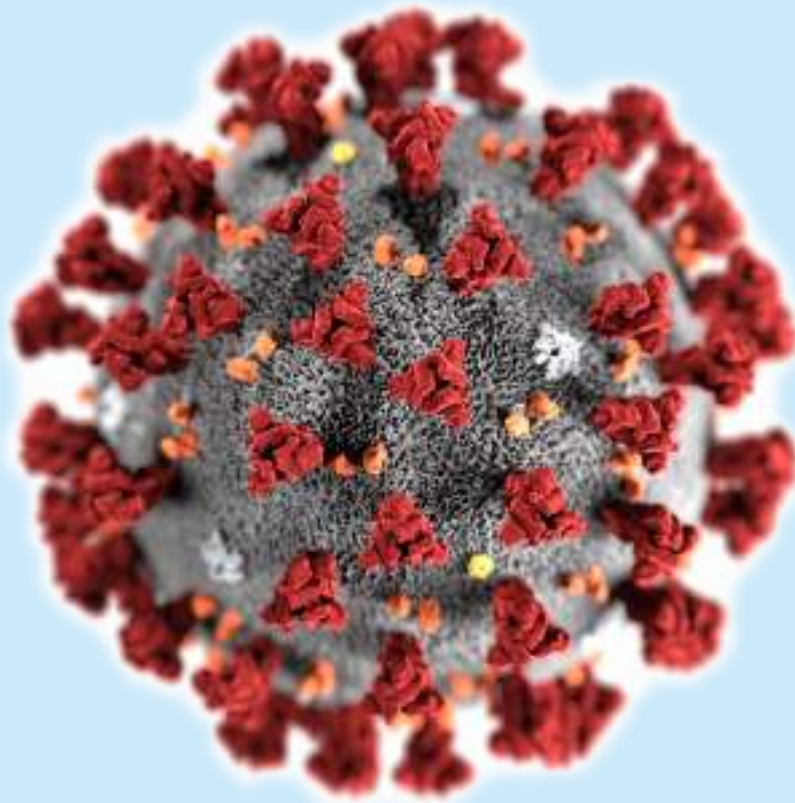


Y

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.

SEE IMPORTANT NEWS ON THE NEXT PAGE

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



THE CORONA VIRUS DOES NOT CIRCULATE
PEOPLE CIRCULATE IT

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

- 01/02 CHICAGO 9 @ The George Inn, Cosham, 21:00
- 01/02 VINCE LEE & AL WALLIS @ The Blues Bar & Grill, Plymouth, 21:00
- 03/02 BUSTED LOOSE (Papa George, Steve Simpson etc) @ Cellar Club, Farnham Maltings, 20:15
- 03/02 GLEN WRIGHT @ Belgium & Blues, Southampton, 20:30
- 03/02 WILKO JOHNSON + JOHN OTWAY @ New Theatre Royal, Portsmouth, 19:30
- 03/02 GASLIGHT SESSIONS @ Platform Tavern, Southampton, 21:00
- 04/02 THE FAT MARROW BAND @ The Ropemakers, Bridport, 21:15
- 04/02 THE BAIL JUMPERS @ The Half Moon, Tiverton, 21:00
- 04/02 THE INFORMERS @ The Piston Broke, Shoreham, 20:30
- 04/02 WILL JOHNS BAND @ O'Connors, Worthing, 21:00
- 04/02 MARTIN HARLEY solo @ The Barrel House, Totnes, 20:00
- 04/02 RUZZ GUITAR'S BLUES REVUE - Album Release at The Cheese and Grain, Frome UK 23:00
- 05/02 CHICAGO 9 The Lord Nelson The Quay Poole Dorset BH15 1HJ 8.30pm
- 05/02 ANIMALS AND FRIENDS FAREWELL TOUR @ Shanklin Theatre, IOW, 19:30
- 05/02 CATFISH @ The Rec Rooms, Horsham, 19:30
- 05/02 DR FEELGOOD @ Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne, 19:30
- 05/02 VODOO ROOM @ The Flavel, Dartmouth, 19:30
- 05/02 BLUES JAM @ The Belvedere, Weymouth, 16:30,16:30
- 05/02 NIGEL BAGGE & EDDIE ARMER @ The Broken Chair Country & Blues Club, Upper Beeding, Horsham, West Sussex 19:30
- 05/02 THE JACKALS @ Hove Park Tavern, Brighton, 21:00
- 06/02 JON AMOR & FRIENDS @ Southgate Inn, Devizes, 17:00
- 06/02 HARRY SKINNER solo @ The London Tavern, Poulner, 16:00
- 06/02 RAW BLUES PROJECT @ Strings Bar & Venue, Newport IOW, 19:30
- 06/02 BLUES JAM @ The Belvedere, Weymouth, 16:30,16:30
- 06/02 STEVIE WATTS ORGAN TRIO @ The Paris House, Brighton, 19:00
- 06/02 JAM DANG DOODLE BLUES JAM @ The Lewes Road Inn, Brighton, 14:00
- 07/02 SAMANTHA FISH + WILLE & THE BANDITS @ Chalk, Brighton, 18:00
- 08/02 Brixham Blues Second Tuesday BBT2 @The Birdcage, New Road, Brixham TQ5 8LT 20:30
- 09/02 JULIA TITUS (Ma Bessie) @ Dorchester Corn Exchange, 19:30
- 10/02 MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD @ Bullfrog Blues Club, Southsea, 20:00
- 10/02 ROBIN BIBI @ Cellar Bar, Farnham Maltings, 19:30
- 11/02 BEN TYZACK & GUY TORTORA @ Emsworth Blues Club, Chidham

Listings are provided as a guide only. DON'T FORGET TO CHECK THE VENUE BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME to ensure that the gig is still on. The listing here is far from complete, so check out www.bluesinthesouth.com/gigs as that is updated all the time: Last date for inclusion here is the 10th of the preceding month - ie., 10 Jan for Feb.

11/02 LAURENCE JONES @ Arlington Arts Centre, Newbury, 20:00
11/02 ALICE ARMSTRONG & MATT LONG @ Uckfield Civic Centre, 19:00
11/02 THE BLUES BAND FAREWELL TOUR @ The Haymarket, Basingstoke, 19:30
11/02 THE ALEX WILSON BLUES BAND @ The Windsor Castle, Shirley, 20:00
11/02 BITTER BLUES @ The Three Lions, Farncombe, 21:00
11/02 RAILROAD INC @ The Eagle, Arundel, 21:00
11/02 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Queen's Head, Gosport, 21:00
11/02 THE JACKALS @ Shortt's Music Bar, Brighton, 21:00
12/02 ISOBEL THATCHER @ The Earl of Normanton, Boscombe, Salisbury
12/02 KABOODLE @ The Goods Yard, Broadstone, Poole, 21:00
12/02 ROAD HOUSE @ The Crown Inn, Bridport, 22:00
12/02 JUNCO SHAKERS @ The Hyde Tavern, Winchester, 19:30
12/02 OLD DOGS R&B BAND @ Village Hall, Dunkeswell, 20:30
12/02 ADAM SWEET BAND @ The Ropemakers, Bridport, 21:15
12/02 GRIZZLY RHYS MORGAN @ Belgium & Blues, Bournemouth, 21:00
12/02 ZOE SCHWARZ BLUE COMMOTION @ Platform Tavern, Southampton, 21:00
12/02 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Ship and Castle, Portsmouth, 20:30
13/02 EDDIE MARTIN solo @ Southgate Inn, Devizes, 17:00,17:00
13/02 MUDLOW @ The Rialto Theatre, Brighton, 19:00
13/02 DAWG 'N BONEZ @ The Neptune Inn, Hove, 15:30
13/02 SPIKEY AND THE BANDITS @ The First and Last Inn, Exmouth, 18:30
13/02 MUTTER SLATER BAND @ The Market House Inn, Bridport, 18:00
15/02 BEN POOLE & GUY SMEETS @ Komedia, Brighton, 19:30
15/02 DUNN & DUSTED @ The George Inn, Cosham, 21:00
16/02 SPIKEDRIVERS @ Crawley Blues Club, The Hawth, Crawley, 19:45
16/02 THE PRODUCERS @ The Bermuda Triangle, Parkstone, 21:00
17/02 BEN POOLE & GUY SMEETS @ Cellar Bar, Farnham Maltings, 20:00
17/02 JON AMOR'S KING STREET TURNAROUND @ Teign Corinthian Yacht Club, Teignmouth, 19:30
18/02 THE HAWKMEN @ The Lighthouse, Poole, 20:00
18/02 STEVIE WATTS ORGAN TRIO with ALICE ARMSTRONG @ The Factory Live, Worthing, 19:00
18/02 RETREAD @ The Strawberry Field Tavern, Locks Heath, Southampton, 21:00
18/02 ADAM SWEET BAND @ Boarhunt Blues Club, North Boarhunt, Fareham, 20:15
18/02 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Ship Inn, Emsworth, 20:30
19/02 LAURENCE JONES @ Bridport Arts Centre, 19:30
19/02 CHICAGO 9 @ The Brewery Bar, Botley, 20:00

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19/02 MIKE ZITO BAND @ Long Street Blues Club, Devizes, 19:45
 19/02 MUTTER SLATER BAND @ The Ropemakers, Bridport, 21:15
 19/02 VODOO ROOM @ Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre, Taunton, 19:30
 20/02 PETE ROBSON @ Muston's Cafe Bar & Grill, Shaftesbury, 16:00
 20/02 SOUTH COAST BLUES JAM @ The Factory Live, Worthing, 13:45
 20/02 PETE HARRIS & JON VAUGHAN @ Platform Tavern, Southampton, 17:00
 20/02 SYKICK SURFERS @ The Admiral Drake, Portsmouth, 16:00
 21/02 MIKE ZITO @ Portsmouth Guildhall, 19:30
 22/02 SYKICK SURFERS @ The George Inn, Cosham, 21:00
 24/02 THE WEST SIDE BLUES BAND @ The Wine Vaults, Southsea
 24/02 COLD HEART REVUE @ Belgium & Blues, Southampton, 20:00
 25/02 THE JACKALS @ The Neptune Inn, Hove, 21:00
 26/02 VINCE LEE AND THE BIG COMBO @ The B Bar, Plymouth
 26/02 MO SLIM STOMPERS @ The Blisland Inn, Blisland
 26/02 THE CINELLI BROTHERS @ The Rec Rooms, Horsham, 21:00
 26/02 MARK FLANAGAN BAND @ Long Street Blues Club, Devizes, 19:45
 26/02 THE BAIL JUMPERS @ The Seale Arms, Dartmouth, 21:00
 26/02 CUCKOOLAND @ The Compasses Inn, Damerham, 21:00
 26/02 THE JEFFERSON ARCHIVE @ The Ostler Inn, Uffculme, 21:00
 26/02 THE INFORMERS @ The Constant Service, Brighton, 21:00
 26/02 GRIZZLY RHYS MORGAN @ Belgium & Blues, Southampton, 21:00
 26/02 THE VODOO SHEIKS @ The Neptune Inn, Hove, 20:30
 27/02 MO SLIM STOMPERS @ The White Hart, Truro
 27/02 THE ALEX WILSON BLUES BAND @ The Bird in Hand, Fareham, 17:00
 27/02 AVERAGE BLUES BAND @ The Thomas Tripp, Christchurch, 16:00
 28/02 KENT DUCHAINE @ The Hawth, Crawley Blues Club
 28/02 R&B JAM @ The Bull, Downton, Salisbury, 20:30





Most Played Album Top 40 – December 2021

Collated From The Playlists Of The Independent Blues Broadcasters Association Members

Position	Artist	Album
1	DION	STOMPING GROUND
2	STARLITE CAMPBELL BAND	THE LANGUAGE OF CURIOSITY
3	WHEN RIVERS MEET	SAVING GRACE
4	SWAMP POETS	HOODOO DU VOODOO
5	THE 2:19	REVELATOR
6	BERNIE MARSDEN	CHESS
7	FRAN MCGILLIVRAY BAND	RAIN
8	DAVE HUNT	BEHIND THE MOON
9	CHICKENBONE SLIM	SERVE IT TO ME HOT
10	GOV'T MULE	HEAVY LOAD BLUES
11	BACKWATER ROLL FEAT. JON AMOR	LIVE AT THE PLATFORM
12	JOE BONAMASSA	TIME CLOCKS
13	MANNY FIZZOTTI	NOBODY UNDERSTANDS
14	JIMMIE VAUGHAN	THE JIMMIE VAUGHAN STORY
15	ANDRES ROOTS	AFTERNOON (EP)
16	THORBJØRN RISAGER & THE BLACK TORNADO	BEST OF
17	HANNA PK	BLUES ALL OVER MY SHOES
18	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	DO RIGHT SAY RIGHT
19	BEN LEVIN	STILL HERE
20	CHRISTONE 'KINGFISH' INGRAM	662
21	JIMMY REGAL & THE ROYALS	AIN'T DONE YET EP
22	SLIM BUTLER	BONE DEEP
23	RGP BLUES BAND	COLOURS
24	HARLEY KIMBRO LEWIS	HARLEY KIMBRO LEWIS
25	MARK PONTIN GROUP	KALEIDOSCOPE
26	E D BRAYSHAW	RANDOM REPEAT
27	RUSTY ENDS BLUES BAND	RUSTY ENDS BLUES BAND
28	FIVE POINTS GANG	WANTED
29	MARY STOKES BAND	CLOUDS IN MY HEART
30	LITTLE G WEEVIL	LIVE ACOUSTIC SESSION
31	DAVE SPECTER	SIX STRING SOUL: 30 YEARS ON DELMARK
32	JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR	THE BLUES ALBUM
33	MEMPHISSIPPI SOUNDS	WELCOME TO THE LAND
34	GREYHOUND GEORGE BAND	GET UP & WALK!
35	ALTERED FIVE BLUES BAND	HOLLER IF YOU HEAR ME
36	THE OLD NO.55	MOMENT TO LOSE
37	ROBIN BIBI	NO MORE A SECRET
38	ELLES BAILEY	SHINING IN THE HALF LIGHT
39	CAROLYN WONDERLAND	TEMPTING FATE
40	BETH HART	A TRIBUTE TO LED ZEPPELIN



Most Played Album Top 40 – Annual Chart For 2021

Collated From The Playlists Of The Independent Blues Broadcasters Association Members

Position	Artist	Album
1	JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR	THE BLUES ALBUM
2	JOANNA CONNOR	4801 SOUTH INDIANA AVENUE
3	EDDIE 9V	LITTLE BLACK FLIES
4	BERNIE MARSDEN	KINGS
5	BILLY F. GIBBONS	HARDWARE
6	REBECCA DOWNES	STRIPPED BACK
7	THE HITMAN BLUES BAND	NOT MY CIRCUS, NOT MY MONKEY
8	STARLITE CAMPBELL BAND	THE LANGUAGE OF CURIOSITY
9	DION	STOMPING GROUND
10	GA-20	TRY IT...YOU MIGHT LIKE IT: GA-20 DOES HOUND DOG TAYLOR
11	CHRISTONE 'KINGFISH' INGRAM	662
12	ALTERED FIVE BLUES BAND	HOLLER IF YOU HEAR ME
13	CONNOR SELBY	CONNOR SELBY
14	THORBJØRN RISAGER & EMIL BALSGAARD	TAKING THE GOOD WITH THE BAD
15	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	DO RIGHT, SAY RIGHT
16	VERONICA LEWIS	YOU AIN'T UNLUCKY
17	DOM MARTIN'S SAVAGES	LIVE AT THE HARLINGTON
18	ALLY VENABLE	HEART OF FIRE
19	TROY REDFERN	THE FIRE COSMIC
20	BIG DADDY WILSON	HARD TIME BLUES
21	DONNA HERULA	BANG AT THE DOOR
22	WILL JOHNS	BLUESDADDY
23	BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS	SPIDER IN MY STEW
24	GARY MOORE	HOW BLUE CAN YOU GET
25	THE BAD DAY BLUES BAND	TABLE BY THE WALL
26	TOMMY CASTRO	PRESENTS A BLUESMAN CAME TO TOWN
27	DUST RADIO	SHOTGUN SHACK EP
28	MOONSHINE SOCIETY	SWEET THING
29	DEB RYDER	MEMPHIS MOONLIGHT
30	WHEN RIVERS MEET	SAVING GRACE
31	JIMMIE VAUGHAN	THE JIMMIE VAUGHAN STORY
32	JOE BONAMASSA	TIME CLOCKS
33	AMAURY FAIVRE	2020
34	GEORGIA VAN ETTEN	DEEP BLACK WATER
35	MARK HARRISON	THE ROAD TO LIBERTY
36	KELLY'S LOT	WHERE & WHEN
37	SAMANTHA FISH	FASTER
38	SWAMP POETS	HOODOO DU VODOO
39	SELWYN BIRCHWOOD	LIVING IN A BURNING HOUSE
40	GHALIA VOLT	ONE WOMAN BAND

HOW THE BEATLES GAVE A

In the early Sixties, bands rarely wrote their own material. But Lennon and McCartney were so prolific, they had hits to spare

By Martin Orkin



THE BEATLES hold the record for the most US number one singles and the second most in the UK after Elvis Presley. They remain the world's most successful artists by records sold – over 600 million – and are widely considered the most influential band of all time, thanks largely to the dynamic writing partnership of John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

But what is less known is the sheer number of songs they gave away, which helped put some of their peers – from The Rolling Stones to Cilla Black – on the path to stardom.

Because of their prolific output, the Fab Four started gifting songs to other artists shortly after the release of their second single and first major hit, Please Please Me, in January 1963. It marked an amazing two years when The Beatles produced sufficient hit songs not just for their own use, but for friends and rivals too.

Please Please Me was soon followed up by From Me To You, which spent seven weeks at number 1 and both sides of all three of their singles to date had been written by Lennon and McCartney.

Almost all of their future hit singles – Something was written by guitarist George Harrison – were composed by John and Paul as well.

But one factor that really marked The Beatles out as extraordinary was the quantity of top quality self-penned material they had available – far more than they could ever use themselves.

IN ADDITION, The Beatles spearheaded the Liverpool sound and were at the forefront of Merseymania during 1963, when a seemingly endless stream of Liverpool groups followed in their wake and enjoyed chart success.

The Searchers reached number 1 with their first hit and went on to have sustained success during the 1960s. Others who benefited from the Beatles effect included The Merseybeats, The Swinging Blue Jeans and The Scaffold, whose guitarist was Mike McGear, McCartney's younger brother.

This gave rise to an unprecedented phenomenon: a group gifting an abundance of their own hit-worthy songs to their competitors. The other enormous change in the music business caused by The Beatles' unparalleled songwriting success was the near death of the professional songwriter.

Independent writers like Burt Bacharach, Gerry Goffin and Carole King wrote for music acts as lucrative freelance composers. But after The Beatles' pioneering example, many acts switched to writing their own material, including The Rolling Stones and The Kinks. Read on for the amazing roll call of hits The Beatles gave away.

● *Rivals Of The Beatles* by Martin Orkin is available from rivalsofthebeatles.com in a limited edition of 500 signed and numbered copies



THE SURPRISING STARS

1 **DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?** Given to Billy J. Kramer with The Dakotas in March 1963, this song was a track on The Beatles' first LP which they had no interest in issuing as a single themselves. Kramer took it to number 2 in Britain. (The B side was a winsome ballad called 'I'll Be On My Way'. Another Lennon and McCartney song, it was almost strong enough to become a hit in its own right.)

2 **LOVE OF THE LOVED:** Cilla Black was the unknown hat-check girl at the Cavern Club in Liverpool until she was taken under Brian Epstein's wing. This compelling best ballad from Lennon and McCartney was her first single. It only reached number 35 but created enough of a stir to pave the way for the two monster hits that followed from other writers: Anyone Who Had A Heart and You're My World. Cilla had two subsequent top 10 hits with memorable Lennon and McCartney songs penned for her: 1964's It's For You and, in 1968, Step Inside Love.

3 **I WANNA BE YOUR MAN:** In November 1963 a new band called The Rolling Stones hammered their way high into the top 20 with this, their aggressive second single. Few realised, until they bought the 45, that this was actually a Lennon and McCartney song. It had just

LITTLE HELP TO FRIENDS



Pictures: GETTY



WHO BENEFITED FROM THE GENIUS OF THE FAB FOUR

been issued by The Beatles as a lowly track on their second album *With The Beatles*, sung by Ringo. Later, asked about letting their rivals the Stones have the song, John commented: "We weren't going to give them anything great, right?"

4 FROM ME TO YOU: Del Shannon, renowned hit maker of classic singles like *Runaway*, had been touring in Britain with The Beatles. He had seen for himself the mass adulation they were receiving from their fans. He liked their number 1 hit *From Me To You*, so he covered it for the American market. (The Beatles were unknown in the US at this time, and their original version had already died a death over there.) Shannon's *From Me To You* charted in the US on June 29, 1963. It only reached number 77 – but it was the very first Beatles song to succeed in America, seven months before they had their own debut hit there with *I Want To Hold Your Hand*.

5 A WORLD WITHOUT LOVE: In early 1964, this great McCartney song was given to struggling duo Peter and Gordon. Peter Asher just happened to be the brother of Jane Asher, who McCartney was dating at the time. It went to number 1 in both Britain and America.

6 WOMAN: After trying out re-treads of old classics (*True Love Ways* and *To Know Him Is To Love Him*) with some success, Peter and Gordon returned to Paul McCartney in 1965 for *Woman*. McCartney was so sensitive about being thought of as a hit factory for others that he insisted the song come out as written by 'Bernard Webb'. Paul claimed he wanted to see if the song would succeed on its own merits – but the truth about its writer came out anyway. It reached number 14 in the US and number 28 in Britain.

7 LIKE DREAMERS DO: The Applejacks were casting around for a follow up to their debut hit *Tell Me When* which had reached number 7. They were offered Lennon and McCartney's unused *Like Dreamers Do* which got to number 20. After one more minor hit with a different writer, The Applejacks faded away.

8 GOODBYE: Paul McCartney wrote this hit for teen singer Mary Hopkin after originally seeing her on television talent show *Opportunity Knocks*. Credited to Lennon and McCartney, it was a sizeable hit. Paul had also produced (though not penned) her first single, *Those Were The Days*, which went to number 1 around the world, selling an amazing eight million copies.

Lots of venues are OPEN for
music gigs



When you start
getting new
bookings, don't forget to 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
SEEN" BY DJ AND GIGGING MUSICIAN IAN MCHUGH (Jazz FM). Tell your friends about it too and
let's get back to NORMAL!





MUSIC VENUE TRUST LAUNCHES #TAKEATEST INITIATIVE

Live Music Fans Urged to Self-Test Before Attending Gigs

London, 19th July 2021 - Music Venue Trust (MVT), which represents hundreds of grassroots music venues, has announced a new campaign to encourage live music fans to take a voluntary lateral flow test ahead of attending gigs.

The #takeatest initiative follows the UK government's lifting of most COVID-19 restrictions from today (July 19th), allowing music venues to fully re-open for the first time in over 16 months and is a response to the move towards 'personal responsibility' as the principal guidance moves forward.

Music Venue Trust, in consultation with grassroots music venues around the country are launching a social media led campaign urging music fans to accept responsibility to keep themselves, their fellow gig-goers and the staff at music venues safe, as restrictions are lifted.

Using the hashtag #takeatest the messaging will be very clear:

Be Kind: Be respectful. Be part of the live music community #takeatest

or

Artists are taking a test to protect you. Staff are taking a test to protect you. Be part of the live music community: #takeatest before you attend a show

Music venues, artists and fans themselves will be asked to promote the initiative on their own social media platforms before they host, perform at or attend an event.

Free lateral flow tests can be ordered online and are available from local pharmacies or for home delivery by visiting

www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests

Mark Davyd, CEO of Music Venue Trust said, "We have spoken at length to our community about reopening venues safely as restrictions are lifted, and while there are differing opinions on some aspects of how we will achieve this there is a consensus about asking music fans to accept personal responsibility to keep themselves and others safe. We have an opportunity through this strong, unified #takeatest messaging across the live music sector to persuade audiences to accept that responsibility and to take a lateral flow test before attending. This is a voluntary initiative that speaks to the sense of community across the grassroots live music sector. We are confident that live music fans will respond positively to this direct appeal from venues, promoters, artists and their fellow gig-goers."

People are asked to begin using the #takeatest hashtag on their social media platforms from 11am on Monday July 19th.





BiTS

Streaming Video Courses from the Best in Blues

Blues In The South

BiTS is delighted to announce a new partnership with MusicGurus who provide music courses & training from the world's top musicians. Watch video lessons to improve your playing and get 1-on-1 coaching.

MusicGurus courses offer a structured approach to learning new styles and techniques through a series of high quality video lessons. All lessons feature HD video & sound, as well as helpful camera angles which allow you to see exactly how it's played.

You can also chat and exchange videos with artists to find out exactly what you need to practice next.

Getting valuable feedback from professional musicians is simple with MusicGurus. Simply start a chat with a tutor of your choice to agree on a subject for your session, then upload a video of yourself playing. Your tutor will check out your playing and send a video with their feedback and tips. It's as simple as that! One-to-one music tuition without the hassle.

Total freedom.

Learn any time, anywhere. Only pay for what you use.

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](#).

[Click this line for a list of available courses](#)

The BiTS Interview: Cathy Ponton King

Cathy Ponton King plays Telecaster guitars, and delivers blues, original music, jazzy blues, 'Nawlin's music and swing, Rock 'n Roll/rhythm and blues and sweet ballads. She was born in Washington DC and attended the University of Maryland where she earned a degree in journalism After college she worked at ABC News before making the decision to put journalism on the back burner as the call to sing, write and perform music became overwhelming.

BiTS: Let's make a start then, shall we? Tell me something about your upbringing. Was there a lot of music in your house when you were a kid?

CPK: Yes. Quite a bit. Actually, my grandmother emigrated to Washington DC, and she was from Ireland. As you know, the Irish are very musical people and when I was a little girl, she used to have really big house parties and they had records playing, but they would turn off the records and then all the guests one by one would take a turn and sing acapella. From the time I was five years old, I thought that it was everybody's turn, so I was singing in front of people since I was five or six years old, and I guess I got hooked on the applause - it's affirmation.

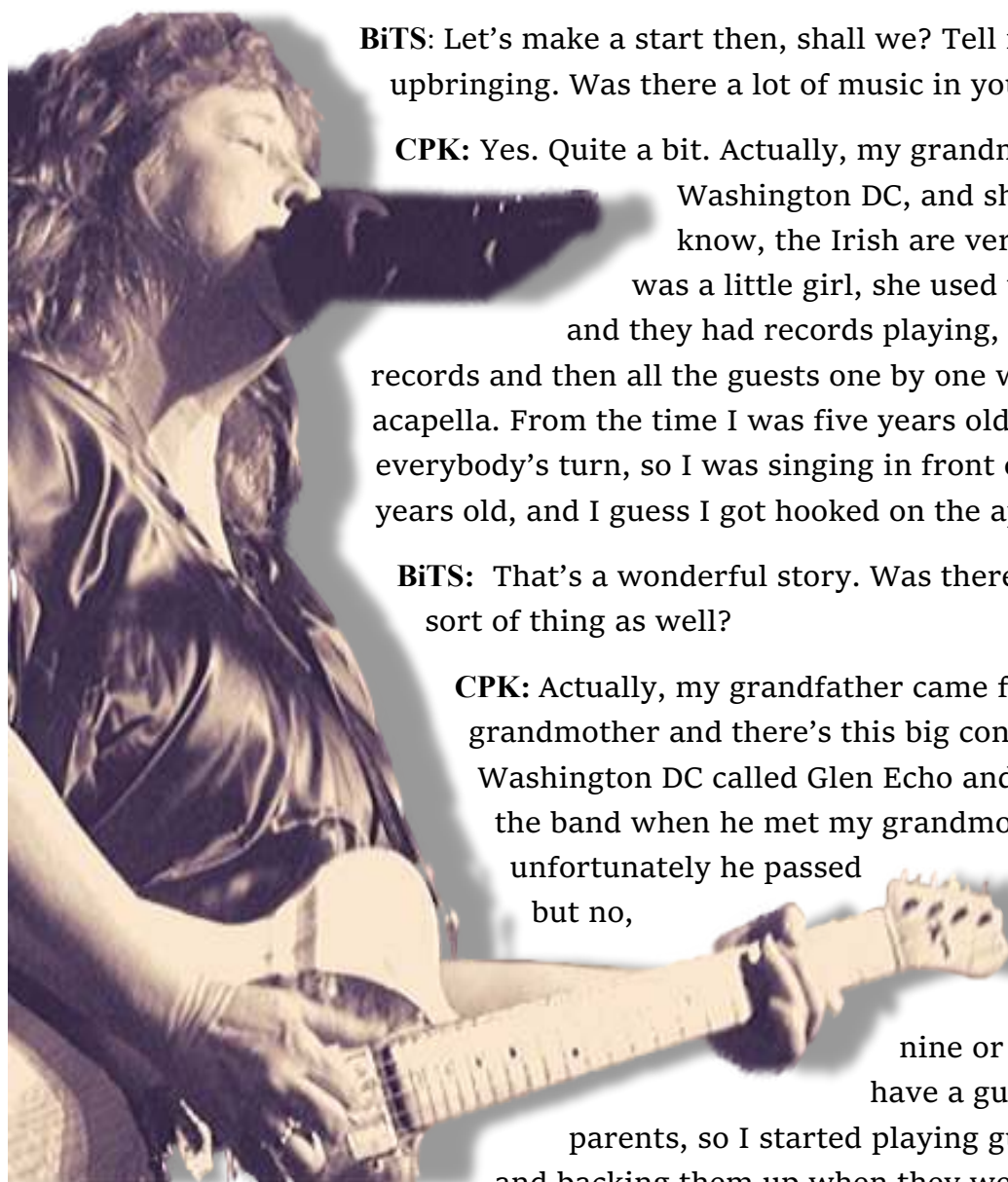
BiTS: That's a wonderful story. Was there a lot of fiddle playing and that sort of thing as well?

CPK: Actually, my grandfather came from Ireland, as did my grandmother and there's this big concert dance pavilion in Washington DC called Glen Echo and he was playing Irish fiddle in the band when he met my grandmother in Washington DC, but unfortunately he passed away before I was born, but no, there really weren't a lot of musicians there, but when I was ten years old, nine or ten years old, I was mad to have a guitar. I begged and pleaded my parents, so I started playing guitar with all the Irish people and backing them up when they were all singing and then I got my

first job at a pub when I was 17 and from then on, I played Irish music. A couple of years later, I was at the University of Maryland and discovered the blues.

BiTS: How did you actually discover the blues, then?

CPK: Well, for some reason, it just had this incredible magnetic attraction. I worked at the campus radio station doing the news at the University of Maryland and then when my shift was over, I would go to the record library and make tapes for myself of every blues record I could find. I mean, I just devoured them. Then I had a boyfriend at the time who got a job as a roadie for a very famous Washington DC band called The Nighthawks and they introduced me to Muddy Waters at a little



club in Washington that's very famous and unfortunately, it is no longer there - it's called The Cellar Door, but Muddy used to come and play regularly there and I was a guest of The Nighthawks, who were the opening act and so I got to sit backstage with Muddy Waters and just soak up all of his wisdom and his aura and it was his birthday, so he had a case of champagne, so I got to have champagne with him on his birthday.

BiTS: What was he like as a person?

CPK: He was in his glory. Back stage he was adored by everyone, and people were coming up the steps to the dressing room and some people that he even knew from Mississippi were there and everyone just adored him, and he had an ear-to-ear smile, and he was just a perfect gentleman. Sometimes he had such a thick Mississippi accent that I had to lean over and listen very carefully to pick up what he was saying with the accent, and he was just so friendly and welcomed all the young white musicians with open arms and he didn't have a racist bone in his body. He hired white



musicians in his band and when he got on stage, it was one of the deepest musical experiences that I've ever had. He just moved me beyond anything I can even put into words, just the depth of his singing and the slide guitar and he was just so deep that it really turned me sideways.

BiTS: Do you remember who was in his band at that time?

CPK: Yes. It was Willie 'Big Eyes' Smith on drums. Jerry Portnoy, who actually recorded with me later - I sent you a sample of a song we did together on harmonica.

BiTS: You did. That's wonderful.

CPK: Jerry went on to play with Eric Clapton on the "From the Cradle" album and the great guitar player Bob Margolin on guitar. Who else am I missing? His nickname was Fuzzy - Calvin Jones on bass and we called him Fuzzy and, of course, the amazing icon of the piano, Pinetop Perkins on piano.

BiTS: What a wonderful band.

CPK: He would do these deep, deep blues where your soul would be moved to another dimension and then break out in this raucous fast blues shuffle and the whole room was just in total exuberance. His fast party blues were the best in the world.

BiTS: I guess that got you hooked on performing and being on stage certainly with a crowd. When did you start doing your own stuff, going out on your own for gigs by yourself?

CPK: It was right about that time. I had played in a lot of Irish pubs around Washington DC, and it provided me with a good college student income, but the problem with it was the people in the Irish bars, they wanted to hear the same Irish songs and some of them were just over done and I wanted to write my own material and I love Irish music dearly, and actually I got to party with The Chieftains one night. Paddy Moloney, who just passed away, came in with his band and I got to meet and hang out with him for a great session. But I was just ready to make a change and so I used blues because I was becoming familiar with The Nighthawks and Muddy Waters and so I just took it from there and formed a blues band and then started travelling up and down the east coast playing at little bars and some festivals. I got to meet a lot of great people, opening for them in festivals like Memphis Slim, who I've heard you play on your show.

BiTS: I have. I love Memphis Slim.

CPK: The festivals were great, so I did that for a good long time, just travelling up and down the east coast.

BiTS: One of the people that you did meet because I've seen a photograph of you with him, is Albert Collins.

CPK: Oh, god, yes. Amazing man.

BiTS: Did you get to play with Albert? Another one of my favourites.

CPK: No. I didn't actually play with him, but I did open for him more than once and he took a shine to me, and we had great, great rapport backstage and he said I want to take you home to California so I can introduce you to Gwendoline. That was his wife and she actually used to write songs with him, his wife. I think he and she would write lyrics together, but anyway, he was just amazing and he used to walk around the room, and back then, they didn't have the wireless pickups on the guitars, and so he had a guy behind him who had a 100-foot guitar cable [chuckling] that he wrapped around his arm and his shoulder and as Albert would snake through the tables in the night club the guy would unravel the cord. But now, Buddy Guy, does it with the wireless. He walks around the room, and he plays with his wireless and then comes back and jumps on the stage again. It's a great performance trick. It really gets the audiences on their feet.

BiTS: Let's move on, Cathy, to your new album or at least making albums. This is not your first, is it? How many have you done previously?

CPK: I have four total.

BiTS: Tell me about the new one, "The Crux".

CPK: "The Crux", as you have heard, is a mixed bag. I always write and I have songs right now in the can that I want to get in the studio and finish and do CD number five because writing is dear to me and so I made it a point on all my records only to do my originals and my husband is a great writer - Jeff King - and sometimes I do his songs. With "The Crux", it starts out with an R&B song called 'You're my Sugarface', which I wrote about my daughter and then there's a Rockabilly song



and then something really amazing happened to me. The phone rang one day, and I picked it up and it was Ronnie Earl. You're familiar with Ronnie's music, right?

BiTS: Yes.

CPK: He has 25 albums out. He's one of the best blues guitar players out there right now and he and I were friends from back in the day when he was touring with Roomful of Blues. He and a friend of mine were dating, so when he came to Washington DC, the two of them would spend the



Ronnie Earl.

night at my house rather than go to a hotel. Anyway, Ronnie called, and I told him I was in the studio, and he said, well, you know what, I'd really love to do a guest on your new album. I was floored. I said, of course. And he said, I don't want you to pay me. I just want to do it because we're friends. That's what a great man he is and so I have him on three songs which it's funny how a lot of the people who play my CD all over the world, like right now during COVID, when I'm not touring I've been putting a lot of my

energy into marketing because the United States is having a lot of very, very, very sadly closing of nightclubs and festivals cancelled. It's just been devastating to be a working musician and so I've been putting a lot of my attention in marketing, but it's funny how a lot of the DJs play the songs that Ronnie's on when they air my CD because his guitar playing is just so drop-dead beautiful that he really played great on my new record, "The Crux". I was really fortunate to catch him. He called me out of the blue just to say, "how are you doing?".

BiTS: That's absolutely terrific. What is "The Crux"? How do you define the actual title itself? What is the crux of things?

CPK: The word itself is something that is of major importance. It's something that stands out as being vital, important and a turning point. It's in the lyrics of my song called 'Blues Companion' and that's one of the ones that gets all the airplay. It's a really driving blues that features Ronnie Earl on some really incredible driving lead guitar and it's one of the lyrics from that song.

BiTS: Tell me about the tune on the album called 'Cerulean'. First of all, it's a word which you could win Scrabble with every time. Where did that come from?

CPK: Actually, that song was inspired by... there's a beautiful beach that my husband and I like to go to in North Carolina. It's the Outer Banks at Kitty Hawk where the Wright brothers flew the first airplane.

BiTS: I know where you are.

CPK: Yes, the Outer Banks and we had this beautiful cottage overlooking the ocean and so I started thinking about the ocean is blue but it seemed in the sunlight to change colours to cerulean which is a very distinctive shade of blue and then I started thinking, you know what's amazing about blue and then of course blues music that I play, there's so many different words for blue. There's indigo, there's sapphire and I think I mention them all, as many as I could get in the lyrics. The first verse talks about I'm looking out on the ocean and throwing all my troubles out to sea, and to me, that's what music is. It's an escape, especially blues, because it confronts all the existential, the darkness of the human soul, but it looks at it squarely in the face and it overcomes, and it turns it into joy. That's why the blues and jazz, to me, are the most precious to my soul.

BiTS: I don't know whether you know it, but there's a song called 'You Gotta Use the Blues to Make you Feel Better'. Is that how you feel about using the blues to make you feel better?

CPK: Oh yes. Of course. There's a lot of people in the world, in society, who think oh, blues, that's so sad, but it's not. I see it as the opposite. I see it as like a purging. Any bluesmen, if you see any interview, all the famous blues musicians through the ages have always said blues is about facing life dead on and overcoming and speaking your troubles and confronting them and turning them into something beautiful, whether it be a slow gut-wrenching blues or an exuberant fast party music. For me, it's a catharsis.

BiTS: Absolutely. Absolutely. Couldn't agree with you more. Tell me something about how the album was made. Did you go into the studio with all tracks already sorted in your mind, or did you make stuff up in the studio?

CPK: Yes, pretty much I had formed all the songs in my mind and I have to tell you, I had a very interesting experience with a bass player who was a world-famous player. My drummer, Antoine Sanfuentes, was friends with this very famous jazz bassist who was going through some really hard times. He was homeless and he had mental issues with coping with reality and, his name is Butch Warren, and he plays upright bass on I think maybe three songs and he played upright bass and I wrote a chart for Butch to follow because Butch played with Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock. He plays on his famous song called 'Watermelon Man', which was a big hit. He played with Grant Green, and the jazz trumpet player. Freddie Hubbard. If you put his name in Google, Butch Warren, he was the house bassist for the Blue Note record label in New York City when he was a young man and things went awry for him in New York. He came back and I think he had a breakdown, and anyway, he was playing in little jazz clubs in Washington and my drummer befriended him, Antoine and we brought him in the studio, and the other musicians pretty much I would play the song once or twice for them and then Jimmy Thackery, the great blues guitar player, he was in on the session and he was greatly of assistance in the arrangements and the piano player, the bass player, when Butch wasn't there, they're pretty much old pros. I go in the studio. I play the



Cathy Ponton King



song a couple of times. Everybody has a piece of paper, and they make crib notes for themselves and then we'd do two or three takes and find out what everybody thinks is the best one.

BiTS: Changing the subject slightly, have you been seriously affected by COVID? Are gigs damaged and all that sort of stuff?

CPK: Oh gosh, yes. There was a club that I have been playing for ten years. Ironically, an Irish pub - here I am back in the Irish pubs - but they booked blues, ironically, but we used to pack the place and it was my local. It was my home base and they closed. They couldn't make it. Lots of clubs were closing, especially in 2020. The gigs just dried up and I'm lucky that I have other income and a lot of musicians I know were filing for unemployment or, I don't know, I guess they lived with their significant other, but yes, it was really devastating. I mean, my nephew is an actor in the local theatre scene, and he lost all his acting gigs because all the theatres shut down and I used to play this big theatre in Bethesda, Maryland, about a half an hour away from me. It was a 500-seat hall and I opened up for great musicians like Coco Montoya and Kim Wilson, Tab Benoit. I opened up for Arlen Roth, the great guitar player, just great double bill shows all the time there and Bobby Parker, who passed away right after our gig, which was very sad, and that place had to shut down. That's a 500-seat hall. We lost tons of work and income. COVID has just decimated things. Even now, I just saw online Lucinda Williams, who I'm a big fan of, singer, she's cancelling a bunch of gigs. Keb' Mo' has posted his gigs cancelling. It's devastating. There's got to be an end to this. It's decimated the music business.

BiTS: Cathy, I won't take any more of your time. Thank you very much indeed for speaking to me. It's been delightful and I wish you the very best of luck in the future with getting some gigs and all the rest of it. Stay safe. Anyway, like I say, stay safe. Don't go out without a mask on.

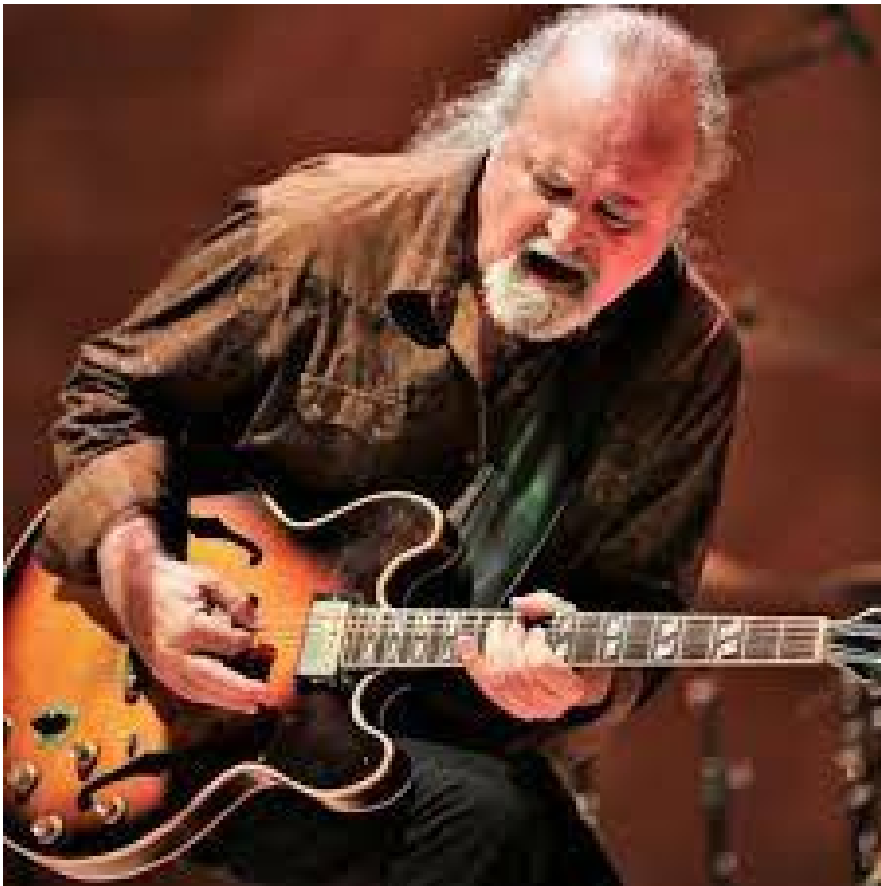
CPK: Alright, it's been a pleasure talking to you.

The BiTS Interview: Tinsley Ellis

Tinsley Ellis (born June 4, 1957) is an American blues and rock musician, who was born in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, and grew up in South Florida. According to Billboard, "...nobody has released more consistently excellent blues albums than Atlanta's Tinsley Ellis. He sings like a man possessed and wields a mean lead guitar."

Rolling Stone said, "On assertive originals and standards by the likes of Jimmy Reed and Junior Wells, Atlanta's Tinsley Ellis unleashes feral blues guitar. Nonstop gigging has sharpened his six-string to a razor's edge...his eloquence dazzles...he also achieves pyrotechnics that rival early Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton". Ian McKenzie spoke to him on-line.

BiTS: Let's make a start, may we Tinsley? I gather that you were born and bred in Florida. Was there a lot of music in your house when you were a kid?



TE: Oh, yes. A lot of church music and my dad liked jazz music quite a bit.

BiTS: When did you first start to be an instrumentalist and do singing and that sort of thing?

TE: My beginnings of music were the first time I ever saw The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show here in America. It was a TV show, and The Beatles were on in 1964, and that's when I decided even when I was only seven years old, I knew that that's what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to play guitar like that.

BiTS: I must have done a dozen or so interviews over the years where people have mentioned this Ed Sullivan show performance of The Beatles. Was it particularly

outstanding? What was it about it that was so attractive?

TE: Well I'd always heard music like that before growing up here in Georgia, but I'd never heard it done by young people. I'd always heard more of African American, the original versions of that. That's just the music of the south and to hear somebody doing it that looked like me. They looked like me, young, skinny white people doing it and I could relate to it. They sold me on the music that I'd already heard.

BiTS: Was that what inspired you to go and get a guitar?

TE: I played guitar a little bit around that time, music like I guess it would have been surf music at the time, songs like 'Secret Agent Man' by Johnny Rivers and things like that. Or The Ventures, of course, you had over there The Shadows. The Shadows were the version of The Ventures for the UK, but that kind of twanging guitar sound but what the music of the British invasion did for me was it turned me onto people like B.B. King and Howlin' Wolf and Freddie King and Muddy Waters and that's how I began my love for blues.

BiTS: Were those the American musicians that you were listening to at that time?



Lonnie Mack plays his Flying V during a concert at LIU Post in Brookville, New York, in 1987 during his Alligator Records years. Photo by John T. Comerford III/Frank White Photo Agency

TE: It would have been people like Lonnie Mack or Booker T and the MGs or The Beach Boys, and really that's kind of like Chuck Berry music, but to get into the Muddy Waters sound or Freddie King, it was pretty much John Mayall or The Yardbirds that turned me onto that.

BiTS: I guess this must have been up until and including the time when you were in high school. Were you in bands in high school?

TE: Yes, I was and we played music of the time. I always gravitated towards that blues sound, so we would do stuff like Cream or the Allman Brothers Band and then when I went to see B.B. King for the first time in 1971 or 72, and then all of a sudden I realised where they got their sound from and started doing more B.B. King music and then later getting with older guys that were playing Chicago blues and learning from the older guys and playing not just the popular blues like B.B. King, but some more deep blues like Little Walter.

BiTS: I gather when you went to see B.B. King that he broke a string which you still have.

TE: Yes, I still have that. That's my souvenir of the first time I heard the blues, and I would have been probably 14 or 15 years old at the time.

BiTS: Where do you keep it, in a drawer or something [chuckling]?

TE: I'm downstairs at my house. It's upstairs in a drawer in a folder along with all of my other photos and autographs of the blues people that I've got to see and meet and sometimes even play with.

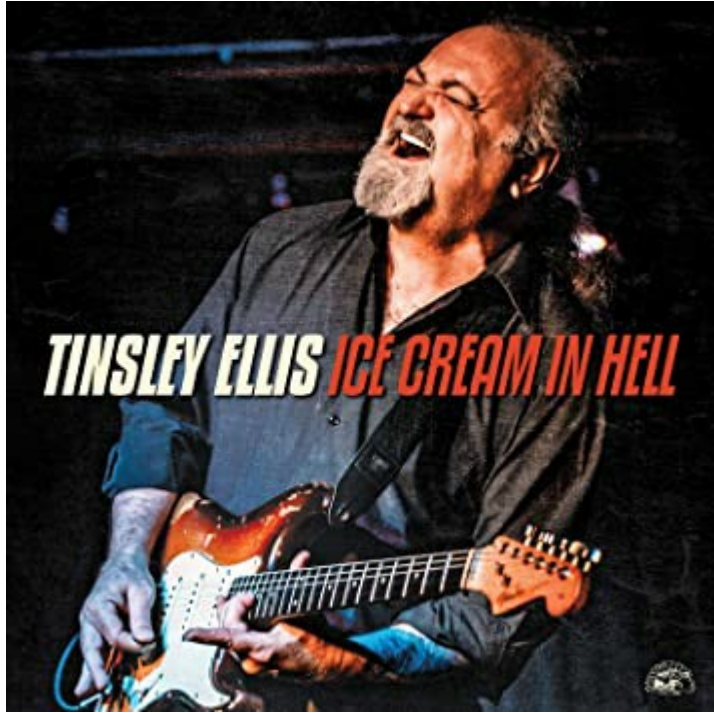
BiTS: When did you first decide, if it's something that you do decide, to become a professional musician or did it just creep up on you?

TE: I was always kind of doing it. In 1968 I played at a talent show when I was 12 years old and we did two songs, we did 'Eleanor Rigby' by The Beatles, and we played 'I'm Not Your Steppin' Stone' by the Monkees. The Monkees had a TV show at the time and we did those. Then I started playing more at parties and things like that when I was a teenager and then did my first professional job I think when I was 16 maybe, and just started doing it more, being in school at the same time and then getting out of school and immediately going on the road with a full-time blues outfit.

BiTS: Now I gather that you have recently gone back to the Alligator label, but they were the first company you signed up with. Is that true, or am I mistaken?

TE: Well, I have been with two other record labels prior to that - a very small blues and jazz label named Southland Records. That was the very first one when I was in a band called The Heartfixers and then after that, I was with Landslide records for three albums in The Heartfixers and then in 1988, 34 years ago, I got with Alligator Records, and I've been with Alligator most of that time although I have left to do stuff with other labels as well.

BiTS: When you were touring the world when you first became professional, is there some



outstanding gig that you can remember where you were standing on a stage somewhere in the world and you thought, my God, what on Earth am I doing here?

TE: Oh yes. All the times that we've opened for artists that were heroes of mine and then I'd be the opening act and then next thing you know they would call me up onto the stage to play. Some of those people were Albert Collins and Buddy Guy and Otis Rush, Son Seals and Koko Taylor, James Cotton and rock bands too like Allman Brothers or Gov't Mule or Tedeschi Trucks.

BiTS: That's a wonderful list of names you've just given me there. It's always one of the sadnesses of my life I never got to see Albert Collins play live.

TE: He was a very nice man. He was very nice to me as well. We kept in touch.

BiTS: I want to talk to you about your latest record but let's talk first of all about "Ice Cream in Hell". First of all, why the title?

TE: The one before the new one. Those are two things that don't really exist together, ice cream in hell, so it's kind of like a saying, almost like grateful dead. Obviously, if you're dead [chuckles] you're not going to be grateful. 'Ice Cream in Hell', so the singer says we'll get back together when they serve ice cream in hell, which means it's never going to happen. That was the title song of that album which we did prior to the new one and that album came out in, I think, 2020.

BiTS: I gather that when you were out promoting the album, you were doing that when COVID hit and you got badly caught some distance away from home.

TE: Oh yes, and it was a bad situation, but we had to come home and I've been home ever since and I'm going to start again soon.

BiTS: When you were at home you spent a lot of time, I think, writing music. I read somewhere that you wrote in lockdown 200 songs. Is that right?

TE: Yes, I have. I came back from Ice Cream in Hell tour and I was very discouraged because all the tour went away and I had all this time and I didn't lose my playing abilities, so I designated every morning from seven or eight in the morning until noon as the time I would write songs and I came

up with a couple of hundred songs and was able to choose from those and that became the new album “Devil May Care”.

BiTS: How do you go about writing a song? Do you have a melody in mind and put it on a recorder and keep on going back to it or something like that? How does it work for you?

TE: I do a demo where I play all the instruments. I record a demo version of the song, and then if I like it enough, I would send it up to Bruce at Alligator and he would write back his thoughts on it. After doing that, of the 200 songs, he probably heard about 70 or 80 of the songs and that’s how we were able to choose what we thought were the best songs for the album.

BiTS: How did you manage to file them down to about ten on the new album “Devil May Care”?

TE: We didn’t argue about it. We just discussed which would be the right songs and I think I chose seven of the songs and he chose three of the songs, I think is how it worked out.

BiTS: Where was the album recorded, Tinsley? Have you got your own studio?

TE: It was recorded at The Rock House in Tennessee.

BiTS: But with other musicians there. Not done under COVID conditions?



TE: These are the same players that I’ve used on the past seven albums, actually and they form a core band much like Booker T and the MGs, or something like that and I just go up there and record with them. They usually play with artists like Delbert McClinton, John Hiatt, Joe Bonamassa, Brian Setzer. They play on their albums and on their tours and so if you’re in this part of the country, pretty much the music business, for rock and roll music at least, is in Nashville, so I go to Nashville to record.

BiTS: Do you have a particular favourite song on the album, or are they all your babies and you’re not going to separate them?

TE: Yes, that’s a tough one right there. I would say my favourite song in a more up-tempo, rocking kind of song, would be the opening song ‘One Less Reason’ and then my favourite song of the slow blues is ‘Don’t Bury Our Love’.

BiTS: Tinsley, when you’re listening to contemporary musicians, who do you listen to?

TE: The common denominator stuff I listen to is guitar. So guitar is pretty much what draws me to music, so I listen to a lot of guitar-oriented music and Gov’t Mule or Tedeschi Trucks or listening to satellite radio like I did today, and I heard a really good Gary Clark Jr song. He’s very good. And then some of my old friends that I’ve known for over 40 years like Jimmie Vaughan, and of course, I will always love Buddy Guy so when Buddy Guy puts out a new album, I always enjoy that.

BiTS: Is there any musician in the world at any time that you wished you could have seen but never did?

TE: Freddie King. I never got to see him. He's probably my main influence as a blues rocker and I never got to see him. I saw Howlin' Wolf. I saw Howlin' Wolf in concert, and I saw Muddy Waters many times and B.B. King and Albert King, but I never got to see Freddie King. It didn't work out, and in the mid-70s, by then he was gone, so I wish I'd seen him.

BiTS: I feel the same way about Albert Collins, I must say.

TE: I saw him and played with him many, many times. Loved him.

BiTS: Have you been badly affected by COVID? I mean obviously, you were locked down and you wrote all these songs, but did you have lots of gigs fall away from underneath you?

TE: Oh yes. We have rescheduled the same tour three times now and we're hoping not to have that happen again, but it might. It might.

BiTS: That's absolutely dreadful.

TE: Well, it is what it is, right? Nothing I can do about

BiTS: Is music your only source of income?

TE: Yes, but I am a songwriter, so I have 20 albums worth of songs, so I don't exactly make a living as a songwriter, but I have one song that sold very well. It was called 'A Quitter Never Wins' and it was recorded by Jonny Lang on his big debut album, and he sold two million copies of it. And then John Mayall just recorded 'A Quitter Never Wins' for his new album.

BiTS: He did. I've got a copy of it, in fact.

TE: Yes, I'm looking forward to hearing his version of haven't heard it yet.

BiTS: I like it very much.

TE: Well, I was so honoured because that's like coming full circle. John Mayall is the one that turned me on to my own music, American blues music and so here he is doing my song and I'm very honoured by that.

BiTS: Thank you very much indeed for talking to me. Just to tell you that this is for the ezine, a web-based magazine called Blues in the South, which is actually the south of England, not the southern states of the US and it will be published at the end of this month for next month.

TE: I look forward to that very much and I know that Alligator records will send that to me. I'm a big fan. I've looked online and read your stuff for years now.

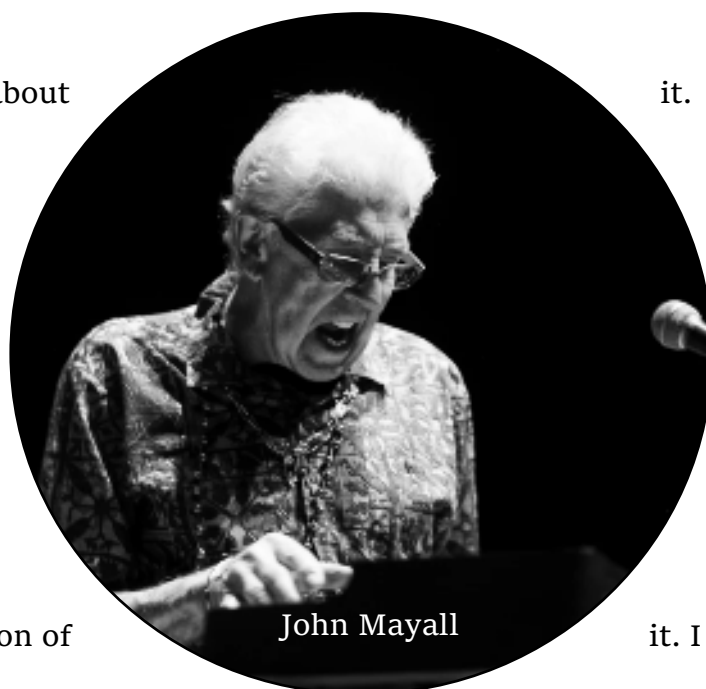
BiTS: That's very kind of you. Thank you very much indeed.

TE: I'm a very big fan. Thank you for everything you do.

BiTS: My pleasure. Thank you for speaking to me .

TE: Okay, I'll look for that.

BiTS: Tinsley, thank you. Bye.



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TEXAS ALEXANDER BY THE NITECRAWLERS

Well it sure don't take a whole lot to work out that bluesman Texas Alexander came from the Lone Star State.

A real old time operator, Texas was a short thickset man with pretty much no teeth who mainly worked the streets where his moaning and hollering blues style, sung in a big voiced, chaotic, free form style, echoed the work songs of the field slaves. "A hard singer to accompany" said Lonnie Johnson "likely to jump four or five bars, just anytime."



Alger Texas Alexander hailed from small town Jewett in the Brazos Bottom Lands, where they "worked sixteen hours for eighty five, ninety cents", although Texas was brought up by his grandparents down in Richards a whole day's walk out of Jewett.

As a young Texan he laboured in the cotton fields or worked the railroad gangs, but soon learned that by strolling the streets and singing acapella outside jukeboxes or on the back of a wagon he could pass the hat and pick up a couple of bucks, enough to pay for corn whiskey, a little food and maybe some change to roll a few dice, and of course, he didn't have to work the fields, and he sure liked the feel of that.

So Texas took to wandering the highway, singing for the levee camps and section gangs, or down Froggy Bottom, and all the time carrying a guitar around with him, even though he couldn't play a single note. "He never played an instrument in his life" said Lightnin' Hopkins "but he'd tote a guitar in case he came up on somebody who could play."

Sometime around the same time Texas got himself in trouble (there was a rumour of attempted murder) and spent some time in the can.

When he got out of the jailhouse Texas headed off to Dallas where he got himself a day-job working in a warehouse while moonlighting the streets and jukeboxes weekends, sometimes working alongside Blind Lemon, and that's how he came to the attention of boogie-woogie pianist and talent scout Sammy Price.

Okeh took him up to New York City in August '27 and over a period of seven days Texas Alexander recorded a whole stack of sides for the company.

His accompanists on those tracks were either guitar man Lonnie Johnson or pianist Eddie Heywood, and they sure earned their dough 'cause Texas had problems keeping a regular tempo. "Had to be a fast thinker to play for Texas Alexander" reckoned Lonnie Johnson "when you with him you done nine days work in one."

Still those first sides did well enough for the company to get Texas back and record him alongside the Mississippi Sheiks and King Oliver.

Not that any of it meant much to Texas. He might have been one of the more popular singers of the day but he still hit the streets, taking either Funny Papa Smith, Lowell Fulson, or Sam Lightnin' Hopkins along with him as he worked those small towns along Highway 80 out from Dallas.

Crowds would gather as Texas hollered out his songs about cheatin' lovers, or doin' jail time, or working the fields, while his guitar man desperately struggled to stay in line.

And all the time those nickels and dimes rattled down into the cup, as Texas made himself a little money then moved on.

It all came to an end when Texas found himself back in a Lone Star jailhouse. Word on the street was he'd murdered his wife but the truth was simpler. As Lightnin' Hopkins explained it, Texas went to the county farm for singing lewd songs in public.

"I got somethin' to make the hair rise on yer head, I got somethin' to make the springs rise on yer bed, that's all it was" reckoned Lightnin' "but he knowed better than to sing that kinda song again."

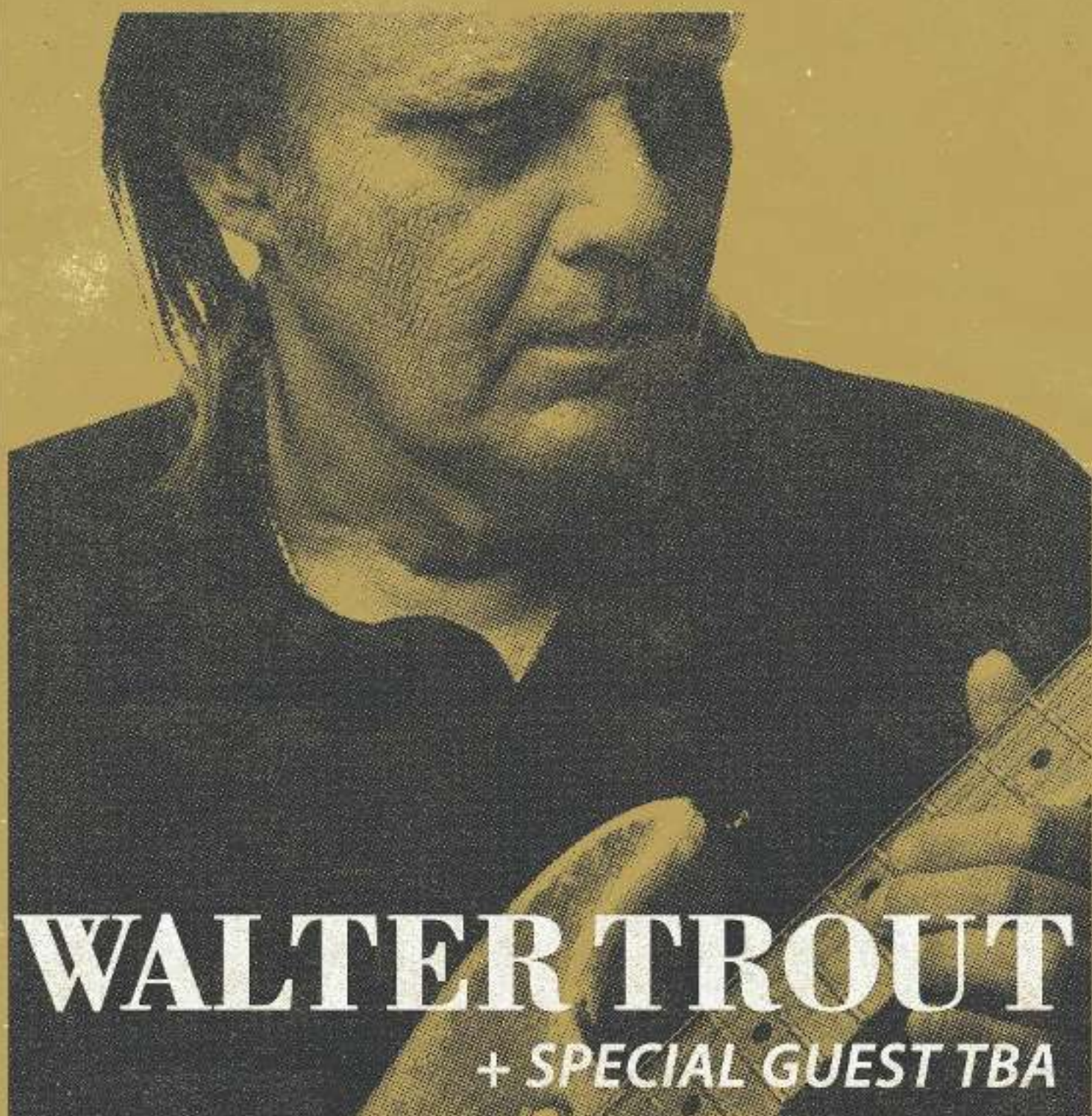
Trouble was by the time Texas got out of the can, tastes had changed and with the rise of electric blues that old hollerin' style of his was way out of fashion.

He spent a few years hanging around Houston working for a while with pianist Buster Pickens, even recording a few tracks with him, but Texas was in poor health, so he headed back home to Richards where he died, almost forgotten, from the effects of syphilis.

Texas Alexander was a throwback, a real earthy singer who lived the blues. But those front porch, hard living songs of his struck a chord with street audiences whose small change helped keep him out of those cotton fields, and in truth that was pretty much all that Texas Alexander had ever really wanted all along.

The Nitecrawlers





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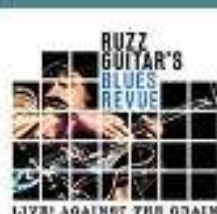
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SEAN ARDOIN – CARRYING THE TORCH

By Lawrence Lebo



Lake Charles, Louisiana native Sean Ardoin has inherited Creole royalty. His grandfather [Amédé Ardoin](#), known as the Father of Creole music, passed their fan base, the music, their business, and the legacy down to Sean's father Lawrence 'Black' Ardoin and his uncles ... and they in turn passed it to Sean and his brother Chris. A ready-made career for Sean to step right into.

They also passed on their musical abilities, and their deep understanding of the Creole-Zydeco genre, the culture, and the history.



Sean's own talent shines bright in his 3rd Grammy Nominated release **"Live In New Orleans! Sean Ardoin And Kreole Rock And Soul"**, recorded during the bands performance at the 2020 inaugural NOLA Zydeco Fest at the New Orleans Jazz Museum. Sean and the band roll through "The Best Of" Sean's repertoire with off the charts contagious joy and energy! Add unusual touches of reggae, hip hop, R&B and gospel ... Ardoin takes up the family torch and runs with it! Sean contributes impeccable accordion work, songwriting and satisfying vocals. One can easily picture the audience laughing, dancing ... having a great time! The recording is a "must have" for any fan or collector of the genre.

A dynamic man of many interests, Sean doesn't shy away from politics! He ran for mayor of his hometown and lost, he ran for president of his Grammy chapter and won! Well-schooled on how to create opportunities, whatever comes his way he seems to know just what to do with it!

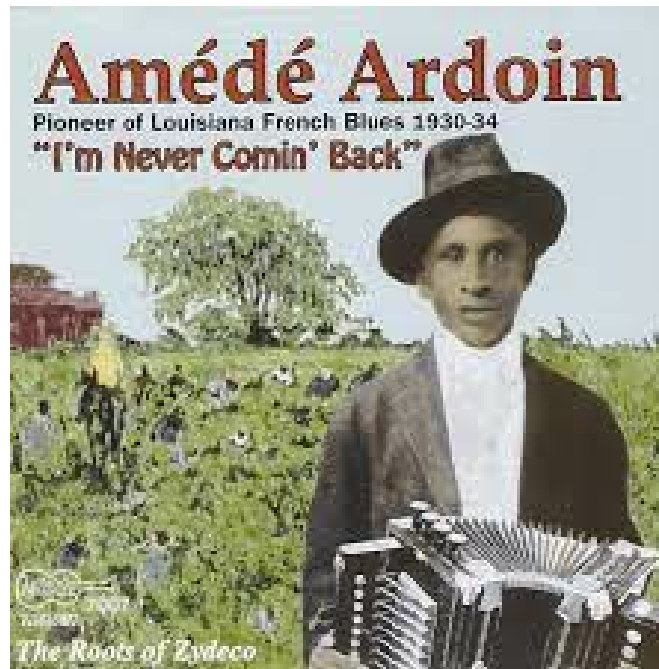
I asked Sean Ardoin to tell us about his famous family legacy and his career. This is what he told me

LL: You are 4th generation of a Creole musician family. Could you please walk us through the history of your famous family?

SA: So, I called Amédé Ardoin my Great, Great Uncle, but he's actually my grandfather, [Alphonse "Boi Sec" Ardoin's](#) close cousin. He was instrumental in getting my grandfather to play accordion. Amedé is credited with being the Father of Cajun and Creole Music. Most of the songs are based on his accordion and vocal melodies. My grandfather was a living legend till his passing, my dad and his brothers were also keepers of the Flame with their band, the Ardoin Brothers, with my uncle Gustave leading the band till he died in 1976. Shortly after, my dad Lawrence "Black" Ardoin took over the band and when all the brothers were no longer in the band, he was looking for a name and I helped him come up with Lawrence Ardoin and Lanniappe. My brother and I took over the band in

1988, I named it Chris Ardoin and Double Clutchin” This was significant because I was also naming the signature bass drum beat, the Double Clutch, that was key to our genre’s identity at the time. In 1999, Chris decided to move on, and I had to start over with a new band that I named, Sean Ardoin-n-Zydekool. In late 2005 I felt like God wanted me to stop music for a while and so Jan 1, 2006, I took a break that would last till 2009 when I released the first Christian Zydeco album, “How Great is Your Love.”

Then in 2013 I came back to the Zydeco world with a vengeance. I had established the Creole



preservation band, Creole United, with my cousin Andre Theirry and I’d recast Zydekool. I released two projects that year, “Non Jamais Fait” with Creole United, and “Return of the Kool” with Sean Ardoin-n-Zydekool. I haven’t looked back since!

LL: How old were you when you started learning and playing music?

SA: I was 4 when I started playing music. Fooling around on the floor tom while my uncle Ronald played behind my dad, turned into playing the whole drum set, when I was about 6, while he went to the bathroom during a gig! Eventually they could trust me to keep the same song set without losing the vibe. Then one day my dad was trying to teach my mom to play accordion and she just wasn’t getting it. He’d come up with a

number system and I said, “she doesn’t know what to do”, and he said, “you can’t play it so stop butting in!”. I said I could, and he said I couldn’t. He handed me the accordion and I did! Then I suggested to him that he add the + and – so I could know when to push and pull, and that helped a little bit, but I was now expected to show the world I could play a song whenever I was present at his performances. That turned into the whole apprentice cycle of loading in and setting up, playing drums, accordion and eventually scrub board, when the main players had to take a bathroom break, breaking down all the equipment after the gig and loading up the trailer then driving home as the designated driver, to then playing a fourth of the gig on accordion and the 3/4 gig on scrub board...to going to college and not playing at all. I missed it and my cousin, who was the drummer graduated college and left and I saw my dad’s band lose a little umph. I was in college looking for a career path and reasoned that if I put all my energy into the family business, it would be way more beneficial to me and my family, so I went back to the band playing drums. The rest is history, never looked back!

LL: No one knows the Creole/Zydeco and Cajun genres better than you, Sean! Can you tell us the differences?

SA: Ok, so you ready for this? The simple definitions are as follows, Cajun is white, and Creole is black. Zydeco is a branch of the Creole tree. All Zydeco music is Creole, but all Creole music is not Zydeco. There are three distinctively different musical paths here in Louisiana. Cajun and Creole music sound very similar, the difference being musical influences. Cajun musicians were influenced by country and folk music, with original Cajun music being string band music, but for this purpose we’ll use the currently accepted idea of Cajun music. Creole musicians were influenced by the blues and the call and response of the African singing tradition. Amedee Ardoin is the father of both genres as his songs are the foundation for both genres. Cajun and Creole music’s original modern instrumentation was single row diatonic accordion, fiddle, drums, guitar, and bass. Zydeco music came after the advent of the other two and was made popular by the accepted Father of

Zydeco music, Clifton Chenier. Its musical influences are boogie, blues and R'n'B music of the 50s and 60s. Clifton was a popular artist on the "Chitlin' Circuit" with all the icons of the Soul music. Zydeco music's original modern instrumentation was piano or two or three row diatonic accordions, guitar, scrub board, bass, drums and sometimes organ and horns if the band was big enough. On the Creole side the two genres became one when [Beau Jocque](#) became the most popular artist. After that, every band with a black man playing accordion became known as Zydeco. Today, Cajun artists have begun to allow the genre lines to be blurred because Zydeco is the most popular music style in Southwest Louisiana, and it is more profitable to say you also play Zydeco music...in the past that didn't seem to be something Cajun artists wanted associated with their brands. The times they are changing, but I understand that we must continue to make the distinction between the two because history has taught us that the black contribution has a tendency to get subsumed by the majority culture and then erased. I am a Culture Bearer and will not let that happen on my watch!

LL: What are your thoughts on how new generations can advance their musical genres while still staying true to the original style and culture?

SA: I am a part of the former new generation that incorporated other forms of modern music into the creative process. I was persecuted by the purists for adding elements of R'n'B, Hip Hop, Rap, Reggae, Rock and the performance aspect to Double Clutchin' and then Zydekool Shows. Folks are



resistant to change, but today, all that I included is now the norm and artists are free to create within the genre. Modern Zydeco must include accordion and scrub board and must have one of the four accepted beats or one of their variations to be considered Zydeco. Just adding an accordion or a scrub board to a song does not make it Zydeco. You must be able to Zydeco dance to it for it to be Zydeco.

I am so happy to report that young people are still learning how to play accordion and forming bands and starting to gig, so the music is healthy and thriving. I would love for them to apprentice more but I understand that this is a new age and microwave mentality is the norm. I will be here to be a reference if they need, but

like I said, I'm glad they're creating, and I will fight for their right to do so and make this next wave in whatever form they choose. The dance has already taken a turn...young folks have their own way of doing it and even though I'm not totally in love with it, I'm totally in love with the fact that they're loving it and doing it!

I've been fighting for the continued growth of the genre and proliferation of the Creole Culture because I understand that "when you're green you're growing and when you're ripe, you ROT!"

LL: Let's talk instruments and equipment! Which accordions and amps are you playing and loving these days?

SA: I don't run my accordion thru an amplifier. I have an internal pickup that I use with a wireless. I can't stand being tied down on stage!! I have to be free to roam and do my thing!! I am a Hohner artist and am LOVING my custom Anacleto Line three row accordions. My single row accordions are Bon Cajun and Bon Tee Cajun from the deceased accordion maker, Larry Miller. I will be getting me some Ed Poullard accordions in the near future. His accordions are second to none in

quality as he takes painstaking measures to make sure the stuff you don't see is first rate! He is also the only Creole accordion maker currently.

LL: So tell us all about your latest release *“Live In New Orleans! Sean Ardoin And Kreole Rock And Soul”* “!

SA: The new release, *“Live in New Orleans”* was recorded in New Orleans on Fourth of July weekend at a festival that my cousins put on to bring authentic Southwest Louisiana Zydeco to the Big Easy. I had my son, Sean David on scrub board and background vocals, my cousin Trey Ardoin on Guitar and Background vocals, Mitch Hayes on drums, Bryan Malbroux on Bass, Ray Carr on Bass and Background Vocals, Zane Gipson on Keys, Corey Stoot on lead Guitar, and Raymond Williams on 2nd Rhythm and 2nd Lead Guitar.

The songs are a combination of songs from my last three releases, *“Kreole Rock and Soul,”* *“Came Thru Pullin”* and *“Coronacation Relationships.”* I wanted to capture the energy of one of my live performances as I got a lot of good feedback on my last live album, *“Live at the Chicken Run”* from 2016-17 and live shows are really where I shine!



LL: *“Live In New Orleans! Sean Ardoin And Kreole Rock And Soul”* is nominated for Best Regional Roots Music Album, your 3rd Grammy nomination! In addition, you are currently president of the Memphis Chapter of The Recording Academy (Grammys), the Chapter to which I belong! What would winning the Grammy mean for you?

SA: Winning the Grammy now would mean the world to me!! It would be validation for a lifetime of creative service to the Culture. It would be a great feather in the cap of the Ardoin family. We have statues on state land at the capitol and we're in the history books of Louisiana. I'm in there as well but as a playing descendent. This would make me an “of note” descendent! I don't intend to stop after this one either. I aim to make the Ardoin name more famous and far reaching than it already is. I created my own genre, Kreole Rock and Soul, in order to create without the confines of the Zydeco idiom. We haven't done a good job of exporting our current music to the world in the years that I took a break, and this caused a gap in the market for our music. The industry isn't aware of what's current and is usually wanting the old-style music when they think Zydeco. So, I want them thinking Sean Ardoin when they think Louisiana Creole music and with Kreole Rock and Soul, when I show up all they're expecting is what they've seen from me. Of course, I'll play older Zydeco music on my set, but this way when I do it's because I want to not because I have to. The first two nominations I received were for the first album I did in the Kreole Rock and Soul genre, and it was titled *“Kreole Rock and Soul.”* This signaled to me that I was on the right path. I keep the Zydeco elements in most of my songs, but I am free to stretch and grow my genre whenever the spirit hits me to! Remember I said I couldn't stand being tied down! lol

LL: You ran for mayor of your hometown Lake Charles, Louisiana in 2020! Would you tell us about your hometown and why you wanted to be its mayor?

SA: Lake Charles, LA was hit by two major hurricanes 6 weeks apart in 2020. We were dealing with the pandemic and then just devastated by the hurricanes. I really felt for my city, and I didn't see anything being done with any purpose to bring us out of the devastation. This inactivity and reactive nature is what I felt the city had been plagued with for the last 30 years or so and I felt that a proactive approach was needed...and I knew the current administration would not take that method in the recovery. So, I ran and got the highest percentage of any African American candidate in the last 20 years. I didn't win but I controlled the narrative and brought up ideas and issues that had never been truly addressed by candidates in previous elections. The day after I lost the election, I started campaigning for President of the Memphis Chapter of the Recording Academy. I had to make my intentions known in November of 2019, prior to deciding to run for Mayor so, when the city made their choice, I switched gears and actually won that election, being president of the Memphis chapter is an honour and it's truly where I'm supposed to be. I am able to advocate and represent artists in a 5-state region and I'm on the national board of Trustees as an alternate. It's a lot of work but so worth it!

LL: You recently had the honour of singing our national anthem at the LSU and Kansas State Bowl game! Can you tell us about that experience?

SA: Ok, so here in the states, we sing the national anthem before sporting events, it's a thing... it's also a thing that I've never done in public before! I was asked to sing at my alma mater's nationally televised bowl game...so yes you read that right...the first time I sing the National Anthem in public is on national television and live in front of 50,000+ people in a huge stadium, in the middle of the field...alone....to say I was nervous is an understatement. There was so much pressure to not mess this up! Lol. I'm now a three-time Grammy nominee and alumnus from LSU... people's careers have ended because of a bad rendition!! But I am glad to report that it went well and apparently well enough that the whole stadium sang along!! You can also see that on my Facebook and Instagram pages as well.

2022 started with a bang and will continue to be awesome! I am playing at Stanford University on Mardi Gras Day and then have a Mexican Tour slated as well as 10 days in Italy at Jazz Asconia in June!! If you want an awesome band at your festival or corporate gig, don't hesitate to reach out!! Sean Ardoin and Kreole Rock and Soul are ready to Rock ya socks off!!!

LL: I have to ask! How's the global pandemic been for you?

SA: The pandemic has been what it's been for all of us, but I recognized that there would be an opportunity for me to regain the ground that I lost when I took that break. I made big strides on my internet presence. I increased my social media, increased my knowledge of video and live streaming, and I honed my virtual performance skills. I had already been doing track shows for the



last 11 years at the time, so it was a natural progression to doing solo virtual gigs. I ended up with the most money I'd ever had at the end of a year in 2020!! I told everyone I could that this was a time for everyone to get a new skill and learn to pivot. You see, there are now people who will NEVER attend a live show again and if you want to reach and service those people you have to be able to perform in virtual arenas. This is the new normal.

LL: What can your fans look forward to coming up for you in 2022?

SA: Hopefully the Grammy win!!! I have huge collaborations coming up in 2022 as well as my long-awaited Dockside Sessions which yielded the tracks, that I believe, are the full realization of Kreole Rock and Soul. I am writing the verses and hooks to them as we speak!! I plan to do lots and make up for lost time in 2022...I did a video on my Facebook and Instagram that you should check out...in it is said, "I got lots to do in 22!" It'll help motivate you if you're needing that!

~ Lawrence Lebo

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

Sean Ardoin belts out the National Anthem in Houston during the TaxAct Texas Bowl at NRG Stadium. (Rick Hickman / American Press)



EARLY PRAISE FOR MICHOT'S MELODY MAKERS

There has been much media praise for “Tiny Island”, the third release from Michot's Melody Makers, featuring special guest-member Leyla McCalla. Tiny Island was released in December 2021 on 45rpm vinyl and video EP as well as a digital download on Louis Michot's own Nouveau Electric Records.

The package was executive-produced by Ned Sublette, produced by Louis Michot, recorded by Kirkland Middleton, and mixed by Mark Bingham. The film was made by Connor Reeve and Samuel Aguirre-Kelly for Fast Friends Productions. NOLA Reconnect was produced by Ned Sublette and Ariana Hall for Postmambo Studies and Cubanola Collective.

“Tiny Island” is about as close to sitting in on a campfire jam session as you’re likely to get. The work was filmed and recorded around a campfire on an island in a pond. Louis Michot has been working to keep Louisiana French Creole music and culture alive for most of his career. Cellist Leyla McCalla has been doing similar work with Haitian Kreyola music. They have played on each other’s records in the past. For Tiny Island, they set up and swapped songs in about as an informal setting as you can get.



Louis is in typically fine form on “Blues de Neg Francais” and “Two Step de Ste Marie.” The session’s informal nature is most evident on “Letibonit.” Leyla introduces the song saying it’s a sad song about a valley in Haiti. When she starts playing, a squeaking noise sounds like it is coming from the rhythm section. It’s just the frogs joining in on the jam.

Bob Pomeroy/Ink19.com 11/3

It’s always exciting to hear Louis Michot and Leyla McCalla collaborate. Both musicians are remarkable in their work not only preserving traditional music — Cajun and south Louisianan styles for Michot and Haitian folk for McCalla — but shattering any stuffy assumptions about these styles, proving they’re living, breathing and current. McCalla in 2016 joined Michot in New York City

for performances as part of the fiddler and singer’s residency at The Stone, a space for experimental and avant-garde works. McCalla and her cello then appeared on the Lost Bayou Ramblers’ “Kalenda,” and last year she joined Michot’s Melody Makers at the Music Box Village as well as a few performances at the Broadside over the last months.

In March, McCalla and the Melody Makers — Michot, guitarist Mark Bingham, bassist Bryan Webre and drummer Kirkland Middleton — got together on a small island on Michot’s property, set a campfire and recorded the five-song “Tiny Island” EP. They also shot a short concert video to accompany the release. A little more intimate than the Melody Makers’ normal electric sets — the sounds of frogs and bugs can be heard in the background — “Tiny Island” features the group settling in to both traditional and original songs in Cajun French and Haitian Kreyol. It’s a charming example of the partnership among people who deeply care about folk music.

JAKE CLAPP/Gambit 10/11

Tiny Island was recorded and filmed by firelight on the night of March 6 on – yes, a tiny island -- in a small pond on Michot's home in Prairie Des Femmes, Louisiana. Played entirely live, the

performance was put together for a tour stop on Ned Sublette and Ariana Hall's NOLA Reconnect, a virtual visit to Louisiana with attendees from all over America and Europe. Featuring a deep sonic collaboration with the tiny island's frog and insect population, the set captures a more intimate and acoustic performance than the higher-decibel, psychedelic shows the Melody Makers are known for.

Their joint repertoire of Cajun and Haitian, Créole and Kréyol songs -- both original and traditional -- coalesced in 2016 when Leyla joined String Noise for a special set at Louis's residency at The Stone in NYC in 2016 (released in 2020 on Nouveau Electric as *Le String Noise* under the L.E.S. Douze collection). Leyla first joined Michot's Melody Makers at New Orleans's Music Box Village for a socially distanced show in November of 2020, and the outfit continued working together on outdoor shows at the Broadside Theater throughout the months of canceled touring.

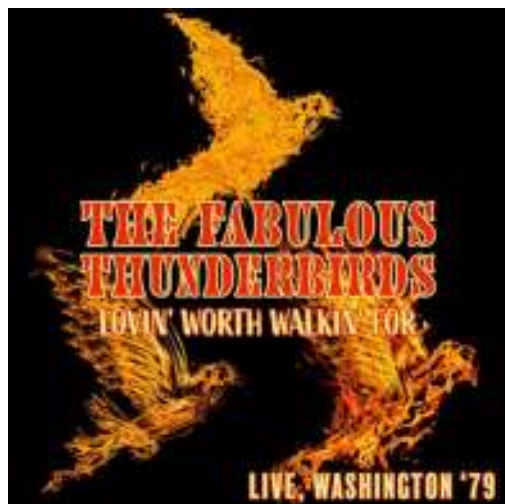
Louis Michot and Leyla McCalla have been collaborating since 2015. Both are lifelong students of their respective linguistic and musical heritages from Louisiana and Haiti, respectively. They appeared together on the title track of the 2017 Grammy-winning album *Kalenda* by Louis's band *Lost Bayou Ramblers*, and Louis guested on Leyla's 2018 release, *The Capitalist Blues*.

Michot's Melody Makers' first show was at the Pine Box Rock Shop in Brooklyn in 2015, and began as an opportunity for Louis Michot to perform live with ad hoc line-ups; the first show featured LCD Soundsystem's Korey Richey on bass, Jason Robira on drums, and Jonny Campos on guitar. For a while, the group's line-up remained fluid and many charter members passed through its ranks including Josh Leblanc of Givers, Bad Chad of Imagine I Am, and Roy Durand of Underhill Family Orchestra. Finally the rotating cast of characters coalesced into a dedicated line-up featuring Mark Bingham on guitar, Bryan Webre on bass, Kirkland Middleton on drums and Louis Michot on fiddle and lead vocals; the latter three are also members of Grammy-winning Cajun progressives, *Lost Bayou Ramblers*.

Michot's Melody Makers won the Best Cajun Band honours in 2018 and again in 2019 at Gambit Weekly's Big Easy Awards. Their debut release on Sinking City Records, *Blood Moon*, provided the first glimpse of how this electric string band could push the boundaries of Cajun traditional music. It was followed by *Cosmic Cajuns* from Saturn, and now *Tiny Island* pushes those boundaries even further.



REVIEWS



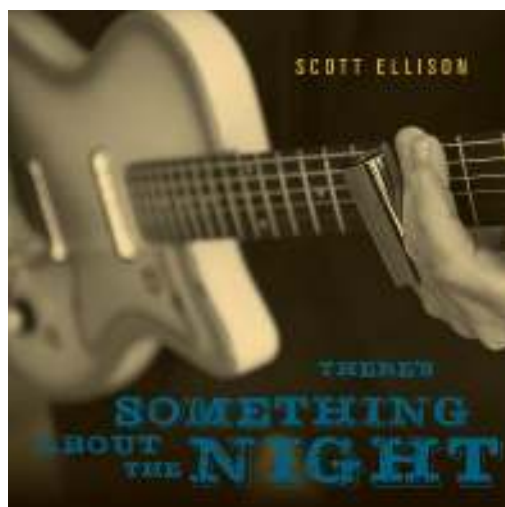
The Fabulous Thunderbirds—Lovin' Worth Walkin' For (Live Washington '79)

I've seen Kim Wilson and various incarnations of the Thunderbirds three times over the years and felt guilty because I've always been a bit disappointed when comparing them with the original 70's version of the band. Hearing them blast through the opening track here Slim Harpo's 'Scratch My Back' I don't feel guilty anymore - this was just great old skool R&B - basic, no-frills, rocking and with great playing and singing from Kim, Jimmy Vaughan (guitar), Keith Ferguson (bass) and Mike Buck (drums).

This is a recording of an FM broadcast recorded live at the Bayou Club in Georgetown, Washington DC in 1979 with the band playing material from their recently released 'Girls Go Wold' LP, this has long been available on bootleg. Recording quality isn't brilliant - bass is a bit too loud - but it does

perfectly capture the band in their prime playing live. The opening four tracks are all rockers, then Frankie Lee Jones' slow blues 'Full Time Lover' slows things down and gives Jimmy Vaughan a chance to play some nice lead guitar. We get to hear Jerry McCain's 'She's Tough' - which was later a chart hit for the band and also the old chestnut 'Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White' transformed by Kim into a funky instrumental (as featured on the Butt Rockin' LP). Then we finish with more rocking including versions of Li'l Millet's 'Rich Woman', Mercy Baby's 'Marked Deck' and a blasting instrumental 'Down at Antone's' with Kim on fire on harp. This is just a superb record of a great band at the beginning of their career, lean and hungry and really laying down a tough, raw and dirty sound that for me is just the pure essence of the blues.

Graham Harrison



Scott Ellison—There's Something about the Night—Liberation Hall

Singer, guitarist and bandleader Scott Ellison, from Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a remarkably consistent blues performer. This is his thirteenth album and I've yet to hear one that is less than extremely listenable and thoroughly enjoyable. That statement does of course include this, his latest release.

Recorded in lockdown, with members of his own band and musicians from Eric Clapton's Los Angeles group, the set includes ten songs Scott co-wrote with Michael Price—the same Michael Price who wrote the classic 'Ain't No Love (In The Heart Of The City)' for Bobby Bland in the early 70s. Scott remakes that song to very fine effect here.

The set though actually opens with a raw-sounding, traditional styled shuffle, 'Half A Bottle Down', followed up by the slow- to mid-tempo blues of the title song. The Albert King-ish 'Good Year For The Blues' references the pandemic. Then there are the slide-driven blues-rockers; the driving 'Blowin' Like A Hurricane', the rather distinctive 'Salina', all soaring slide and an accordion in the backing, and the more traditional 'Meat And Potatoes', the kind of thing J.B. Hutto might be playing these days if he were still walking the Earth.

'Feast Or Famine' has a big brassy intro, backing vocalists and a soul-blues approach; 'Chains Of Love' (not the Big Joe Turner song) also has a soul tinge. This admirable set closes out with the fine modern blues of 'Where Do You Go When You Leave', containing just a hint of Ray Charles. Not a single track here is less than excellent. Do check out Scott Ellison!

Norman Darwin

(www.scottellisonband.com)



Boo Boo Davis + Electro Blues Society—Transatlantic Quarantine (sic) Sessions—Black & Tan B&T 987

Regular *BiTS* readers might recognise some of the numbers on this set, as a few have seen release as digital singles and have been reviewed as such. East Saint Louis bluesman Boo Boo, a real old school blues singer, harpman and drummer, has been working with Dutch label Black & Tan since 1998. They weren't going to let a little thing like a nearly global lockdown get in the way, and these quarantine tracks are the result.

Boo Boo tends to just do his thing—tough, no-nonsense vocals and wailing blues harp—whilst the ElectroBluesSociety (label boss Jan Mittendorp on guitar and “buttons” and Jasper Mortier on drums and bass) complements him

with some raw electric guitar work, and often computer generated rhythms and effects. Having listened to and enjoyed the singles, it was something of a surprise that the album itself comes across as a balance of blues and electronica. On the individual releases, it often seemed as though Boo Boo was the main focus, but on this set, there is a definite, very recognisable hybrid style.

Purists might quibble about it, but Boo Boo himself seems quite happy about it. See it as a salient reminder that the blues isn't just for old folks, you know.

Norman Darwen

(www.blackandtanrecords.nl)



Şenel Karatepe—Hard Times—Bone Union BUR1109

Dutch label Bone Union, a subsidiary of Black & Tan Records, continues the intriguing, innovative and highly interesting documentation of the Turkish blues scene that it began in 2020 with another highly entertaining release. Şenel Karatepe is a singer and acoustic guitarist working in a solo setting on a set of tracks recorded around 2005 and 2006 in Izmir.

The nine tracks are all accomplished performances and draw from a range of influences. There are four Robert Johnson numbers—the opening ‘Stones In My Passway’, which like all the performances here is not that different from the original but has its own charm, ‘Travelin’ Riverside Blues’, ‘Walkin’ Blues’, and a laid-back ‘Rambling On My Mind’.

There there is a brooding cover of Muddy Waters’ ‘Louisiana Blues’, a fine version of ‘Driftin’ Blues’, and rather unexpectedly (though the album title might lead some to expect it), a reworking of Ray Charles’ ‘Hard Times’. A vibrant rendering of Big Bill Broonzy’s ‘Hey Hey’ is my favourite track of the set, and precedes the closer, Eric Clapton’s ‘Crying’, which fits in perfectly.

A very listenable and enjoyable release from a new and evolving blues location. It is worth checking out.

Norman Darwen

(www.blackandtanrecords.nl)



Harlem Lake—a Fool's Paradise Vol. 1—Independent

Now this is rather different, but nicely so. This eight track set from a Dutch band spans Americana to blues-rock, taking in rock and soul along the way, and all convincing and exciting.

When they play live, the band frequently goes for the whole works as a 12 –piece, but the core of the band lies in female vocalist Janne Timmer, guitarist Sonny Ray Van Den Berg, and youthful keyboards player Dave Warmer, who first founded the band as The Dave Warmerdam Band some years back. They have opened for Walter Trout and are winners of The Dutch Blues Challenge.

The reason for that last named award is made quite obvious on listening to this release. There is the muscular, spikey blues-rock of the opening 'Deaf And Blind' and the slide-driven 'The River' to the much quieter 'Guide Me Home' (a slight touch of country-soul here?) and the slow-building southern rock of 'I Won't Complain', whilst 'Please Watch My Bag' is a churning blues. The closing track, 'I Wish I Could Go Running' is a pretty straight-forward, gritty Chicago blues styled shuffle and makes for a very fine finale.

The whole album is extremely impressive. I look forward to hearing more from this outfit but this will certainly do for now.

Norman Darwen

(www.harlemlake.com)



Marcus Flynn—Aint Nothin but the Blues Again - Thoroughbred (Single)

A new name to me but this guitarist and singer has played with some of the biggest names in the contemporary music world, as well as plenty of television work. Here he has teamed up with promoter/songwriter/ all around good guy Pete Feenstra to pen a fine modern blues. Running to just short of four and a half minutes, this is mid-tempo and offers the listener a moody, layered backing; it features Marcus' confident and just slightly mellow vocals plus some excellent modern electric guitar playing that builds nicely as the song progresses. Certainly it will be interesting to see (and hear) what Marcus comes up with next –and he has an album due in March...

Norman Darwen

(www.marcusflynn.com)



Misty Blues—One Louder—Lunaria Luna-0010

Fronted by the excellent, commanding, and distinctive vocals of Gina Coleman (also chief songwriter and cigar-box guitar player), Misty Blues is based in Massachusetts. The band is prolific—this is their eleventh album since they were formed in 1999. However, *One Louder* is their first for UK based label Lunaria, and although Misty Blues' releases are remarkably consistent, this takes things up another notch.

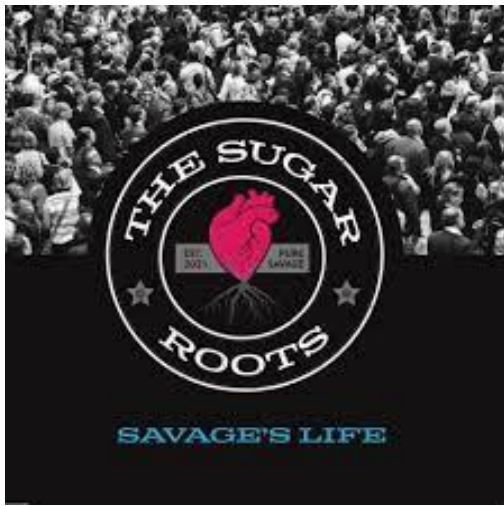
It's not just the presence of Joe Louis Walker gracing 'Take A Long Ride' either, though that is a marker for the esteem the band enjoys. Acclaimed guitarist Justin Johnson supplies some very impressive slide playing on 'Freight Car' and vocalist Big Llou Johnson adds a lot to the tough no-nonsense Chicago styled blues of 'How The Blues Feels'.

The six band members themselves (plus others as required) excel whether tackling funk, soul, and gospel-tinged blues — try 'Leave My Home' - or just the blues pure and simple. There's some excellent work by the horns — take a listen to Aaron Dean's sax break on the opening, ever so slightly country inflected 'A Long Hard Way' for an immediate confirmation of that statement. Next up is the funk-blues flavour of the aforementioned 'Freight Car'. Then there's the New Orleans feel of 'Seal Of Fate'...

All eleven tracks are strong, original songs (no thinly-disguised retreads here!), all well worth a listen. Do check this band out for yourself—you'll be hearing a lot more of them.

Norman Darwen

(www.lunariarecords.com)



The Sugar Roots—Savage's Life—Lightning in a Bottle

This is a new name to me, but I doubt that lead singer and multi-instrumentalist Chad Rupp and his crew are new to the blues. The Sugar Roots were formed in 2021 in Portland, Oregon, and the participants on this excellent album include some names I have heard of before: backing vocalists Lisa Mann and Karen Lovely, and especially veteran guitarist Lloyd Jones, who appears on the tough, slightly funk-inflected 'Rain Checkin'.

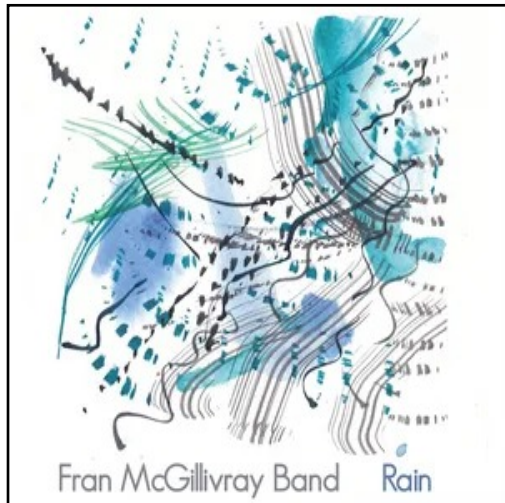
The material also demonstrates the breadth of the blues. The set opens with the excellent mid-tempo Chicago blues-styled strut of 'Going Nowhere Fast' (particularly fine blues harp by the leader) and stretches to the Hooker 'n' Heat flavoured boogie of the seven minutes plus of the closing '1 4 5 Boogie'. In between are such delights as the lazy sing-along shuffle of 'Havin' A Party', the slightly Doctor John-ish title track, the wonderful slow grind of

'Something Wicked This Way Comes' and a Johnny "Guitar" Watson flavoured 'Sweet Lovin' Daddy'. There is also a rather fine cover of Steve Miller's 'Rock 'N Me'. But really, there's not a poor track here.

So yes, I was impressed with this set—a lot. Do try and check it out, it offers first-rate solid blues all the way.

Norman Darwin

(www.lightninginabottlerecords.com)



Fran McGillivray Band—Rain—Joka Records

The Fran McGillivray Band are well established on the British blues scene both as a duo and a trio. With their new album of original material it's the trio that features here.

The title of the album is referenced in the opening track, 'The Flood' a nice rootsy paean to climate change. There is some lovely melodic guitar work in the jazz tinged 'I Play By The Rules' whilst 'Come Up Smiling' has a funky almost Reggae feel to it with a nice touch of flanged guitar. 'Havana Blues' has a great groove with a bossa nova beat and some delicious vocals from Fran.

With 'Jump Back' you will be tapping your feet to this up tempo almost Bo Diddley beat. The descriptive 'Toronto Nights' is almost an Americana ballad whilst 'Too High A Price' takes us back to twelve bar blues territory. There is some nice electric piano that feeds a great groove on 'The Struggle' and the album closes with some nice light stripped back blues with 'I Want To Hear You Sing'.

I think it was Aristotle who said, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" and that certainly is the case here with this album. Roger Nunn's percussion is so much more than timekeeping, it really enhances the overall sound and brings the songs to life. Mike Burke is such a consummate guitarist. He has a lovely clean tone with an understated style of playing that makes every note count, a craft he has honed over the years. Fran McGillivray plays the bass in a style that really gives the band that great understated identity, once again, something that can only be honed over the years. Her touches of flute and keyboards are really tasteful but where Fran really excels is with her vocals. She has a lovely effortless timbre that is so gentle on the ears and like Sade, Randy Crawford or Norah Jones I could listen to her all night!

With this album there are hints of Chris Rea, Latin inflections and jazzy blues. It is not over produced which lets the music breathe just like a JJ Cale album does. The whole is certainly greater than the sum of the parts and I recommend you give 'Rain' a listen, what a great way to start 2022!

Ged Wilson



Cold Flame—Still Burning The Blues “Old Veins New Blood Edition”—Starring Records

Over the last thirty years or so Cold Flame have built themselves a great reputation across the British blues scene and the European circuit too performing original blues based material. Based in Derbyshire UK, band leader and driving force Pat Rowbottom has produced a 20th anniversary edition of the ‘Still Burning The Blues’ album, which has been re-mastered with some previously unreleased tracks. The subtitled “Old Veins New Blood” references this update and the expanded twenty track format.

The album opens with ‘End Of The Line’ which has an opening salvo of guitar gymnastics from Simon Dowling that leads into some fine 1970’s style blues rock along with some hard driven flute. A crescendo of flutes opens the title track ‘Burning The Blues’ a story of life on the road featuring some nice sax soloing which gives off a Blodwyn Pig style vibe. Next up is a rocky cover version of Booker T Jones ‘The Hunter’ followed by some interesting key changes and great tenor sax work from Pete Cheetham on ‘Still Need You By My Side’. Chas Duncan and Keith Bonthron combine on piano and vocals respectively to produce the lovely stripped back blues, ‘First Time Blues’. ‘Another Day Gone’ is a nice acoustic folky offering with shades of Jethro Tull whilst ‘Something New’ has a light punk feel to it.

There is a variety to this album that captures shades of rock, folk, jazz and prog but the album is all tied together with the Cold Flame signature blues sound.

‘Wise Men And Fools’ opens with some lovely vocal harmonies that briefly remind me of Gentle Giant. ‘The Piper’s Song’ has that distinctive British folk rock notion about it with a guitar sound not too dissimilar to Back Street Crawler. ‘No Worry’ is a more laid back blues offering that brought to mind Steve Roux.

The life of a blues rocker is captured in ‘I Want To Be Me’ and who doesn’t want to be a rock and roll star? The guitar work has that Z Z Top style that really drives it along, great track I really liked this one. There is a nice piano and flute combination on the folk rock instrumental ‘Elven’.

The bass guitar and drums combine beautifully to really lift the acoustic guitar on ‘After Mongolia’ a nice song that brought to mind Jonathan Kelly. The album closes with a cover version of the famous Bill Withers song ‘Ain’t No Sunshine’.

Pat Rowbottom as well as being a fine bass player and songwriter has assembled and produced a fine album here that has something for everybody whether you are new to Cold Flame or a long time fan, there is plenty to explore and enjoy.

Ged Wilson



Sean Taylor —The Beat Goes On—Independent Release

Sean Taylor is a well established solo artist on the blues scene both here in the UK and throughout Europe. Sean’s latest release, ‘The Beat Goes On’ will be his twelfth album.

The album opens with ‘It’s Always Love’ a reflective song that has a poignant heartfelt gentleness about it. The sax from Michael Buckley is beautifully laid over the sounds of electric piano. ‘Lament For The Dead’ as the title suggests has a sadness about it that is moved even further by Brian Standefer’s sensitive cello. At times I can hear echoes of Nick Drake in Sean’s acoustic guitar picking. The title track ‘The Beat Goes On’ lays down a jazzy piano groove with some more lovely sax whilst ‘Better Times’ is a beautiful song of hope.

Once again on this album Sean is ably supported by Mark Hallman who has such a great ear not only to add the bass and drums but also add lovely touches of Hammond organ and pedal steel guitar in just the right places.

'Nocturne' is a piano instrumental that has a dreamy quality about it that just lets your mind drift. It is noticeable how Sean's piano playing has improved and come to the fore in recent months. With 'Nowhere To Hide' Sean creates a groovy blues vibe that draws you in, something that he seems to do so well. 'Let Kindness Be Your Guide' carries a good message and has a more Americana feel about it that brought to mind Bob Dylan circa 'Slow Train Coming'. The album closes with a piano ballad 'The Heart Of the Ocean' a beautiful song so atmospheric you can almost feel the sea spray!

Once again Sean has produced a fine album, one that is perhaps more reflective but also full of love and hope. As well as being a great guitarist and pianist his gentle whispering voice has matured in such a way that his lyrics just flow and please the senses. Sean has now developed into one of Britain's finest contemporary songwriters so if he is new to you please go and check him out.

Ged Wilson



Little G Weevil—Live Acoustic Session—Hunna Records HRC D 2106

Originally from Budapest, Hungary, Gee formed his first band in 1996, who continued to tour Europe until 2004, when he moved to America, while he was there he spent time in Birmingham, Alabama and Memphis, Tennessee where he secured a steady gig on Beale Street in Memphis.

Sadly, Gee had to return to Hungary for personal reasons in December 2018, the year his album "Back In Alabama" was released. During the following year he continued to tour Europe but, while lockdown was in effect, he wrote a novel entitled 'Játssz Tovább' (meaning Play On), based upon his musical adventures around the globe.

In 2020 he recorded an electric album also entitled 'Play On'. With this, his latest album, recorded in February of this year; he sat alone, with his acoustic guitar in the vaunted "Stone Room" at the Super Size Recording

studios, in Hungary to lay down sixteen unedited numbers in a room consisting of thick stone walls, wooden floor and a high ceiling.

These materials became essential ingredients to the overall sound of the music. Gee's distinctive singing voice, the crisp, clean clarity of his guitar work and the sturdy flooring, all combined to create a unique sound. The two opening numbers 'Keep Going', and the Hill Country Blues 'Real Men Don't Dance' display all of this. With his insistent percussive foot-pounding behind gentle but enticing guitar work, his Delta infused hollering certainly attracts your attention.

The traditional twelve bar blues of 'Early In The Morning', is given a new lease of life by his warm and mellow picking that forces you to pay attention. 'Dad's Story' is a warm personal tribute to his father who lost the family farm during the communist takeover in the 50's requiring the family to move to the city where his father had to work in a factory. This tribute is played in an engaging, almost joyful, attractive piedmont style. R.L. Burnside's 'Poor Black Mattie', possesses a frenetic and compelling picked train-like hook which captures you from the very start. The sparse and bleak blues of 'She Used to Call Me Sugar', is full of strong emotive picking and sad vocals. John Lee Hooker's 'Roll and Boogie', is undoubtedly a splendid high energy, finger stinging stomper.

Simply splendid!

Brian Harman.



Dionne Bennett—Sugar Hip Ya Ya—Hunnia Records

Dionne is a British Jamaican singer-songwriter and producer, she is also a radio personality who hosts and produces her own music show titled 'The Suga Shack' for her local radio station, Radio Cardiff. In addition, she is also a vocal and performance university lecturer, who coaches the next generation of singers on the music scene and at degree level Dionne also chairs the Diversity Advisory Group at the Royal College of Music Drama. For this album, Dionne has collaborated with producer; songwriter and artist Little G. Weevil, the album was recorded in Budapest Hungary with local musicians Laszlo Borsodi, guitar; Attila Her, bass; Lajos Gyenge, drums and Matyas Premecz, keyboards. Horns are supplied by the Jambalaya Horns,

who are, Tamas Sovari, trumpet; Zoltan Albert, saxophone. The ten numbers here consist of eight originals and two covers. Little G. Weevil occupies the producer's chair and adds his song-writing talents to eight of the numbers.

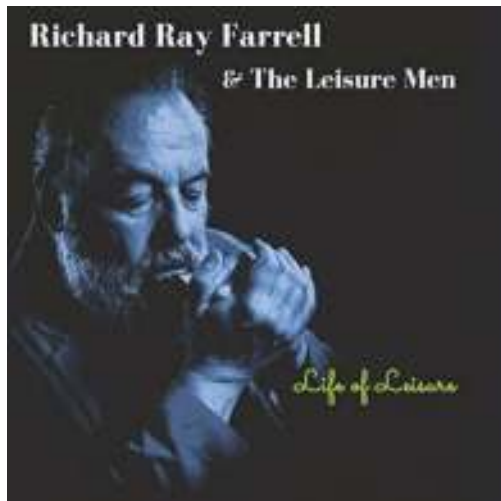
The album opens with an energetically captivating brassy, punching and blasting version of the classic Etta James 'Tell Mama', with Dionne's commanding vocals taking centre stage. Allen Toussaint's 'Yes We Can Can', previously recorded by Lee Dorsey and The Pointer Sisters, possesses a mellow funky groove punctuated by a sweetly enticing trumpet. Dionne's captivating vocals firmly endorse the sentiments of the lyrics.

'Sugar Hip Ya Ya', tells the tale of a strong, forthright woman, the strident, insistent percussion and twisting, (almost prog rock) floating keyboards melding well with the soul filled vocals. 'Get Style', is quite simply a funky, grooving floor filler. This eight minute epic comes with a solid back beat and a low rolling bass line. The percolating, sinuous organ-work rolls and twists away as Dionne urges us all to get some style!

'Spy Me', is another splendid funkier that incorporates insistent and enticing percussion and sinuous (almost prog rock) keyboard work, allowing Dionne's inner Tina Turner to blast it out. The slow, popping and burning keyboards and the equally slow, punching guitar introduce the emotive 'Don't Fall for Love'. This is a reflective tale of image versus a sad reality.

Superbly entertaining!

Brian Harman.



Richard Ray Farrell—Life Of Leisure—Karonte ASIN : B09HVR32D7

I was vaguely aware of Richard Ray Farrell as an American blues singer/guitarist based in Spain so was somewhat shocked at the first track here, 'Don't Judge by the Colour' which features him playing both harp and guitar - and fabulous harp at that - with Jimmy Reed-style blow bends. Next up is a bluesy reading of Charles Sheffield's 'It's Your Voodoo Working' and he also covers Sonny Boy Williamson's 'Please Forgive' both with more harp. His band The Leisure Men are Troy Nahumko (guitar), Sergio Barez (bass) and Pablo Barez (drums) and they play their part in making this a great authentic-sounding record.

'The Way You Do' is a John Mayall song and the title track is a 'Leaving Trunk' clone, while both 'Blues Come Creepin' In' and 'One of These Days' are very down-home and dirty. 'Build Myself a Cabin' features slide guitar, 'So Sad at Day Break' is a lovely slow blues with both great guitar and more great harp and we bow out with Lloyd Nolan's 'I Don't Know About You'. The album sounds like really authentic Chicago blues, despite being recorded in Spain, although finishing touches and mastering were done back in the U.S.

Graham Harrison



Backwater Roll Blues Band—Backwater Roll (Live at the Platform)—Self

Backwater Roll are a band from Southampton featuring Miff Smith (vocals & harmonica), Deano Matthias and Louis Matthias (guitar) Barry Pethers (bass) and this record also features guest Jon Amor on guitar. We start with 'Mr. Highway Man' a track that also featured on their 2014 album 'Live at the Platform' and I'm glad to report that it is still a down and dirty blues with boogie piano and lead guitar solos a plenty. They also tackle Bo Diddley's 'Who Do You Love' and Jimmy Reed's 'Big Bad Boss

Man' which also featured on that earlier record but Fleetwood Mac's slow blues 'Love That Burns' is new and at 12 minutes really gives the guitarists a chance to stretch out.

'Shoe On the Other Foot' is funky and 'Done Lost Your Good Thing Now' is another slow blues. The ensemble finish off with a nod to Jon's old band with a rocking cover of The Hoax's 'Fistful of Dirt'. This is fairly standard British blues/pub rock, I'm sure it was great if you were at the gig with a few drinks inside you but not sure it really holds up on record.

Graham Harrison



Şenel Karatepe—Hard Times—Black and Tan Records/Bone Union Records BUR 1110

Bone Union Records and Black and Tan are to be thanked for their commitment to bringing to attention some of the great music that comes out of Turkey. Founded in June 2020 by Sarp Keskiner (Turkey) and Jan Mittendorf (Netherlands) in order to create a ground for mutual cultural exchange, Bone Union Records aims to document a neglected musical scene in Turkey not just by releasing archival material from mid-90's to this date; but also by releasing brand new material from Turkish artists.

This is one of the latter.

Born and based since 2017 in Lüleburgaz (a small city, near the Bulgarian Turkish border) Karatepe has developed a smooth style covering the work of blues masters, but without sticking slavishly to their arrangements. He is an interpreter not a revivalist. There is music from Robert Johnson ('Stones In My Passway', 'Travelling Riverside Blues', 'Rambling On My Mind') and songs by Muddy Waters, Charles Brown, Big Bill Broonzy and Ray Charles. They are delivered with skill and panache.

What is missing though is any insight into Karatepe's own music. One or two originals would help immensely in judging the overall impact of what otherwise is modest tribute, not compelling originality.

Ian K. McKenzie



Garth Hudson and Various—Garth Hudson Presents a Canadian Celebration of the Band—Curve Music.

What a surprise this record is! There's very little blues here but some seriously good rock and blues rock originally from the band known as The Band.

Garth Hudson has put together a selection of 18 tracks —+2 bonus tracks on some editions— of his favourite music from the band that for a while was known as Bob Dylan's band.

It must be said this album was first issued in 2010 and is reissued here as a celebration of its more than 10 year existence.

The music includes a great track from Neil Young with The Sadies, great version of 'Wheels on Fire', a song of course written by Bob Dylan with Rick Danko. Suzy McNeil brings us a great version of 'Ain't Got No Home', a New Orleans classic from Clarence 'Frogman' Henry with some great keyboard work from Todd Lumley.

Another Dylan song 'Clothes Line Saga' comes from the Cowboy Junkies, the well-known (2) brother (1) sister trio of Peter Timmons, Michael Timmons and Margo Timmons. Love it.

Not surprisingly, Dylan aside, many of the songs come from the pen of Robbie Robertson front man of The Band: for example, 'Canadian Driftwood', 'Out Of The Blue' and 'The Shape I'm In'.

This is a terrific reminder of the fabulous music that was created by Robertson and his colleagues and as I listen to it, I was constantly reminded of a great movie "The Last Waltz" which if you haven't seen it, is recommended to you.

This one is well worth checking out!

Ian K. McKenzie



Healing Kind Of Blues—Val Starr & the Blues Rocket— Sandwich Factory Records

"Healing Kind of Blues" is Val Starr & The Blues Rocket's 6th CD and what a delight it is!

The album continues Val's unique style of uplifting, inspiring, California Blues and as it says on the tin "contains multiple styles of blues, including shuffles, swing, ballads and rock infused blues." The album features special guest appearances by Canadian powerhouse blues keyboards wiz, Debra Powers and has contributions from blues violinist, Ilana Katz Katz from Boston, MAS.

Largely written during the pandemic, Val Starr says, "Above all else, there is no denying the healing power of music."

Well, healing power a-plenty here.

As Val puts it herself: these are songs forged largely during the pandemic. She has taken the opportunity for introspection and I reached inside to relay personal anecdotes on getting older, with humour and grace, as well as demonstrating a profound love for the blues. The title track 'Healing Kind of Blues' is a cracker of a song with some outstanding bass work, while 'All About the Shuffle' sounds like a song the Andrews Sisters, from all those years ago might have covered. Try the feisty 'Outside Looking In' its a cracker too. Finally 'We're Not Getting Older' (we're getting better) is an anthem for all of us 'over the hill' who need a pick-me-up. Healing indeed.

Ian K McKenzie





Jimmie Vaughan - Raining In My Heart



Lazy Lester: Sugar Coated Love



Katie Webster & Vasti Jackson: Those Lonely Lonely Nights

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