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# Bits

## BLUES IN THE SOUTH

SEPTEMBER 2025

Issue #461

INTERVIEW WITH  
JANIVA MAGNESS

INTERVIEW WITH  
FABRIZIO POGGI

J. B. LENOIR  
BY JOHN HOLMES

A SONG THROUGH TIME BY  
MAT WALKLATE

REVIEWS

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MISCELLANY

JANIVA MAGNESS



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

- 04/09 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The New Inn, New Street, Salisbury, SP1 2PH 19:30
- 07/09 STOMPIN' DAVE(folk/roots) @The Portsmouth Hoy, Poole Quay, BH15 1HJ, <https://www.stompinstore.com>,16:30
- 09/09 BRIXHAM BLUES @ The Birdcage, Brixham. 20:00
- 10/09 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The Duck Inn, Duck Lane, Laverstock, SP1 1PU 19:30
- 11/09 JOHN LAW'S RE-CREATIONS @ Teign-Corinthian Yacht Club. 19:00
- 12/09 PAUL GARNER BAND @ The Emsworth Music Club, 43 Havant Road, Emsworth PO10 7JF, [www.emsworthmusic.club](http://www.emsworthmusic.club)
- 19/09 OTIS JAY BLUES BAND @ Ringwood Meeting House, BH24 1EY, 19:30
- 19/09 THIRD DEGREE @ Bridgwater Arts Centre, Somerset, 19:30
- 30/09 THE BONESHAKERS @ Tuesday Night Music Club, Coulsdon
- 02/10 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The New Inn, New Street, Salisbury, SP1 2PH 19:30
- 07/10 TV SMITH @ The Emsworth Music Club, 43 Havant Road, Emsworth PO10 7JF, [www.emsworthmusic.club](http://www.emsworthmusic.club)
- 08/10 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The Duck Inn, Duck Lane, Laverstock, SP1 1PU 19:30
- 10/10 CHRIS DIFFORD @ The Emsworth Music Club, 43 Havant Road, Emsworth PO10 7JF, [www.emsworthmusic.club](http://www.emsworthmusic.club)
- 11/10 WISHBONE ASH @ Glassbox Theatre, Gillingham, 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour
- 14/10 BRIXHAM BLUES @ The Birdcage, Brixham. 20:00

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](http://www.bluesinthesouth.com/gigs) as that is updated all the time.

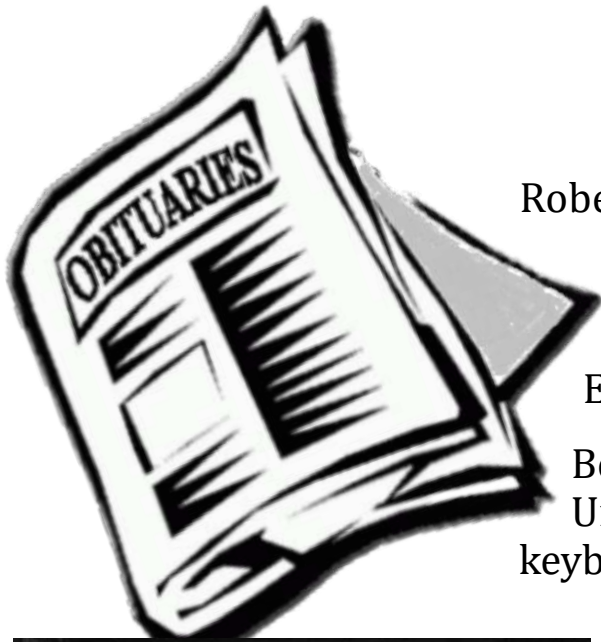
- 15/10 MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD @ The Bridge Inn, Topsham, Devon 19:30
- 25/10 WISHBONE ASH @ Cheese & Grain, Frome, 55<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY TOUR
- 25/10 THIRD DEGREE @ Kingsclere Village Club. 19:30
- 01/11 THIRD DEGREE @ The Platform Tavern. 20:30
- 06/11 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The New Inn, New Street,  
Salisbury, SP1 2PH 19:30
- 11/11 BRIXHAM BLUES @ The Birdcage, Brixham, 20:00
- 12/11 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The Duck Inn, Duck Lane,  
Laverstock, SP1 1PU 19:30
- 15/11 THIRD DEGREE @ Conford Village Hall. 19:30
- 16/11 THIRD DEGREE @ Poole Hill Brewery. 15:00
- 28/11 THIRD DEGREE @ Thomas Tripp, Christchurch, 21:00
- 04/12 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The New Inn, New Street,  
Salisbury, SP1 2PH
- 09/12 BRIXHAM BLUES @ The Birdcage, Brixham, 20:00
- 10/12 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The Duck Inn, Duck Lane,  
Laverstock, SP1 1PU 19:30
- 12/12 THE SPIKEDRIVERS @ The Emsworth Music Club, 43 Havant  
Road, Emsworth, PO10 7JF, [www.emsworthmusic.club](http://www.emsworthmusic.club)
- 01/01 PETE AND PHIL'S BLUES JAM @ The New Inn, New Street,  
Salisbury, SP1 2PH 19:30





# Bobby Whitlock

18 March 1948 - 10 August 2025



Robert Stanley Whitlock was an American singer, songwriter, and musician renowned for his role on keyboards and as a vocalist in the blues-rock band Derek and the Dominos, which he co-founded with Eric Clapton in 1970.

Bobby Whitlock was born in Memphis, Tennessee, United States. He was renowned for his role as a keyboard player and vocalist in the blues-rock band Derek and the Dominos, which he co-founded with Eric Clapton in 1970.



He began his career in the vibrant soul music scene of the 1960s, performing with acts such as Sam & Dave and Booker T. & the M.G.'S. His first contribution to a recording was in 1967, when he supplied handclaps on Sam & Dave's single "I Thank You".

His prominence grew through his work on George Harrison's seminal album "All Things Must Pass" and as a key contributor writing or co-writing half the tracks to "Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs".

He spent some time playing in Delaney and Bonnie and Friends.

Whitlock released several solo albums in the 1970s and, after a hiatus, returned to music in the late 1990s with collaborations including his wife CoCo Carmel in Austin, Texas.

During his time with Derek and the Dominoes in London, The Elton John Band was their opening act. In his autobiography, Elton John said, "They were phenomenal. From the side of the stage, I took mental notes of their performance ... it was their keyboard player Bobby Whitlock that I watched like a hawk. ... You watched and you learned, from people that had more experience than you".

In 2003, Whitlock and his partner/wife, musician CoCo Carmel, collaborated on "Other Assorted Love Songs", a live album that again revisited the Dominos' songs, as well as including Harrison's 'All Things Must Pass'. Music critic Bruce Eder praised the album, writing: "The classic pieces [from Layla] hold up magnificently ... [H]ere, acoustic guitar and piano are more than sufficient accompaniment and, indeed, coupled with Whitlock's powerful singing and range, make a strong case for these being the definitive versions."



## Most Played Album Top 40 - July 2025

Collated from the playlists of the Independent Blues Broadcasters Association members

Position	Artist	Album
1	THE MIGHTY BOSSCATS	4000 WEEKS
2	THE BONESHAKERS	LIVE TO BE THIS
3	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	OLI MAC PRESENTS SLIM PICKIN'
4	EVA CARBONI	THE BLUES ARCHIVES
5	KENT BURNSIDE	HILL COUNTRY BLOOD
6	DEVON ALLMAN	BLUES SUMMIT
7	LARRY MCCRAY	HEARTBREAK CITY
8	MARIA MULDAUR	ONE HOUR MAMA: THE BLUES OF VICTORIA SPIVEY
9	BUDDY GUY	AIN'T DONE WITH THE BLUES
10	JIMI 'PRIMETIME' SMITH	IT'S MY TIME
11	GARRY BURNSIDE	IT'S MY TIME NOW
12	CHAMBERS DESLAURIERS	OUR TIME TO RIDE
13	CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE	LOOK OUT HIGHWAY
14	DOUG MACLEOD	BETWEEN SOMEWHERE & GOODBYE
15	ALICE ARMSTRONG	FURY & EUPHORIA
16	D.K. HARRELL	TALKIN' HEAVY
17	WILL WILDE	BLUES IS STILL ALIVE
18	REVERE RIVERS	I WAS BORN OF WATER
19	ANTHONY GOMES	PRAISE THE LOUD
20	JOE BONAMASSA	BREAKTHROUGH
21	MICK SIMPSON	CHANGING TIMES
22	MONIKA NORDLI	HARD WORKING WOMAN
23	KIRKY TG	KIRKY TG & SINKIN' DOWN
24	JOHN FOGERTY	LEGACY: THE CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL YEARS (JOHN'S VERSION)
25	YATES MCKENDREE	NEED TO KNOW
26	WILLIE BUCK & BOB CORRITORE	OH YEAH!
27	PAUL BUTTERFIELD BLUES BAND	PAUL BUTTERFIELD BLUES BAND
28	THE BRITISH BLUESCASTING CORPORATION	SAINTS & SINNERS
29	DAVE ARCARI	STILL FRIENDS
30	WARREN HAYNES	THE WHISPER SESSIONS
31	GINA COLEMAN	UNEQUIVOCALLY BLUE
32	PHILIPP FANKHAUSER	AIN'T THAT SOMETHING
33	SYMMETRY	ANOTHER HORIZON
34	JANIVA MAGNESS	BACK FOR ME
35	DORIS BRENDEL & LEE DUNHAM	BIG BLUE SKY
36	JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR	BLACK & GOLD
37	BROTHER BUFFALO	BROTHER BUFFALO
38	LUCY ZIRINS	CHASING CLOCKS
39	JIMMIE VAUGHAN	DO YOU GET THE BLUES?
40	THE ALEXIS P. SUTER BAND	JUST STAY HIGH





# Editorial

Hi, just one of our occasional editorials to try to keep you up-to-date.

This edition of BiTS, is a first: the first occasion we have ever had links to music files—in the article by top blues harp player, Mat Walklate. Please check them out and let me have your comments. ([editor@bluesinthesouth.com](mailto:editor@bluesinthesouth.com))

I had really wanted to 'embed' the files so you didn't get sent elsewhere to hear them, but the software I use won't play the game at the moment. I intend to keep on trying.

On that front, is there anything that you would like me to look into doing? And while we are at it, who would you like to see in the pages of BiTS as an interviewee? I can't promise that I will be able to contact them, as my experience is that occasionally, management are a problem and sometimes even the artists themselves can be a bit 'precious'. That aside, let me know ([editor@bluesinthesouth.com](mailto:editor@bluesinthesouth.com)) what you want.

Next a reminder to all those of you who are performers, entrepreneurs, managers, organisers of jams and open mic events and/or festivals that the BiTS Gig Guide is an outstanding way of publicising your event.

Check out <http://www.brownbearsw.com/freecal/BITS> to see the user friendly interface. With the potential to reach hundreds of blues music lovers, the DIY insertion of gigs is pretty simple and of course the whole thing is **FREE**. If you are unwilling to do the DIY thing, email the details of your gig(s) to ([editor@bluesinthesouth.com](mailto:editor@bluesinthesouth.com)) and someone will do it for you.

Finally, a gentle reminder to those of you who send music to radio and Internet stations for air play. Please, please, please make sure that the 'metadata' also known as 'the tags' are up to scratch. It ensures that your submission does not get lost and that the information passed to listeners is accurate and what you want. I shall be running an article next month on 'Tagging and Related Love Songs' so if it pertains to you ensure that you get next months Blues In The South (BiTS) [Click here to subscribe.](#)

Best wishes to all'y'all

**Ian K McKenzie**



# THE BITS INTERVIEW: JANIVA MAGNESS

**Janiva Magness (born January 30, 1957) is an American Grammy Award[3] nominated blues, soul, and Americana singer, songwriter, and author. To date she has released 17 albums. In 2009, The Blues Foundation named her the B.B. King Entertainer of the Year becoming only the second woman, after Koko Taylor, to be so honoured. The award was presented by B.B. King himself.**

**Ian McKenzie spoke to her on the telephone at her home on the west coast of the USA.**

**JM:** Hi Ian.

**BiTS:** Hi, Janiva, if you're ready let's go. I know something about your growing up and your childhood. I haven't read your biography, but I know something about it anyway. But first, tell me, where does the music come from?

**JM:** Thanks for asking that, Ian. My father was a beautiful singer, and he played harmonica, as it turns out. The musical side would come from his side of the family. He was never, I shouldn't say never, he was not a professional musician as such, even though he did sing on the radio with a group in very early days.

**BiTS:** That's very interesting.

**JM:** Before he and my mother even met.

**BiTS:** And when did you start singing, then?

**JM:** I was what is considered a late bloomer, meaning I didn't start trying until I was around 19 years old, and in the music business, nowadays people start you when you're five [chuckles].

**BiTS:** That's very true [chuckles]. That's very true.

**JM:** So 19's a late bloomer but didn't really end up pursuing it as a career until I was in my 20s.

**BiTS:** What drove you to it, Janiva?

**JM:** I mean, I didn't understand it at the time. I need to qualify that. I didn't understand what was happening, but today I can





articulate. I was chasing the experience of the music, the experience of connection that the music brings, really to all of us, I believe. How it made me feel connected, tethered. Up until that point, I was a bit, you would say, feral [laughs]. I wasn't really tethered.

**BiTS:** And how did the blues find you? Where did you get blues music from?

**JM:** That was such a gift. Such a blessing, an early blessing. My father had some blues recordings, mostly early country Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Buck Owens, that kind of music that he was playing around the house, but he did have some choice blues records.



Later—meaning when I was the ripe old age of 14—would be the first time I would see Otis Rush. That same year I would see B.B. King, and the way that that made me feel, seeing them live, the experience of their music, the total desperation of Otis Rush, of course, in his voice, in his playing, the raw, the really raw truth that was happening there, that was coming out of him. I mean, I couldn't articulate any of this when I was 14. I was devastated. I felt like I was being taken hostage in a very good way, a very good way.

**BiTS:** Wow! That is a hugely powerful effect. Both of those people were fabulous guitar players. Did you not have any inclination to learn to play the guitar?

**JM:** Yeah, I've had the desire, and I've never followed through with it. It might be too late [laughs]. It might be too late.

**BiTS:** I don't think it's ever too late but never mind. Let's move on. You've been in the business for some time now. How many years have you been active as an artist?

**JM:** Well, let's do some math, shall we, because I always lose track of that? It's definitely 40, let's say, good Lord, is that right? I've got to check the calculator. Hang on [laughs]. Yep, 49 years, my friend.

**BiTS:** Wow, that's absolutely terrific.

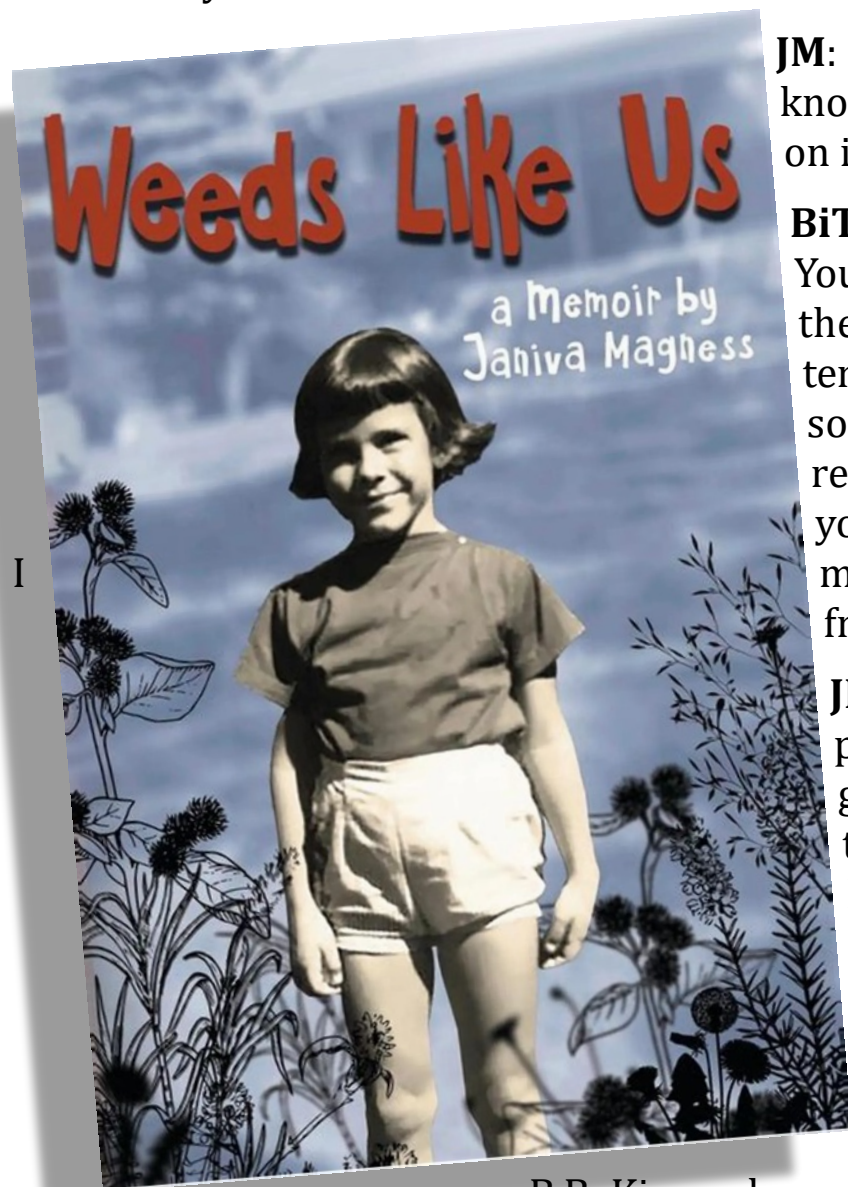
**JM:** Yeah, I mean, 49 years, isn't that crazy? Forty-nine years, 17 albums. It's been good.



**BiTS:** I'm glad it has been. You certainly deserve it. Like I said, I read a little bit about your childhood, and I'm intrigued by your memoir, as you call it. Why did you choose to call it 'Weeds Like Us'? That's a rather strange title.

**JM:** Ah, there's a song that I have titled 'Weeds Like Us', and the chorus is: weeds like us are hard to kill.

**BiTS:** Okay!



**JM:** If you can't find that song, you let me know. I'll make sure you get your hands on it, Ian.

**BiTS:** [Laughs] Thank you very much. You've already mentioned 17 records; the latest one is I think absolutely terrific, and when the last one came out, somebody who was reviewing it, referred to the power and pathos of your voice, which I tend to agree with, must say. But where does that come from?

**JM:** Oh, I think it comes from a few places. I would say that there's some genetic concerns there [chuckles], there's some genetic responsibility. My father really had a lovely, lovely voice and there are other singers in his side of the family, generations back. Church singers so on and so forth. But I would put it to the early influences, I mean really, truly

B.B. King, who said himself countless times, he was a gospel singer. So his incredible singing voice and being influenced by that, early on. I would not get exposure to other influential singers, other than listening to stuff on the radio and singing along like a minah bird, but not until I was in my 20s. I would see Etta James for the first time when I was in my 20s, early 20s, and that was a very profound experience for me. Other than that, I would say it's my history, in other words, my history, or also known as you need to read the book [chuckles].

**BiTS:** I do need to read the book. I really only found out about it a couple of days ago and as soon as I'm able to, I'm going to get a copy and read it.

**JM:** I'll get you one. I can get you an audio book which is narrated by me, or I can get you digital quite easily. U.S. Postal Service takes a bit longer, doesn't it?

**BiTS:** I'll tell you what I'll offer to do for you, I shall be publishing this interview a little later, but I'll do a review of the book for you as well.

**JM:** Exquisite. Thank you. I actually published the memoir in 2019, and I'm in development right now. We're adapting the book into a limited series.

**BiTS:** Oh, wow, really. This sounds like I've got an exclusive here [laughs].

**JM:** [Laughing] You know what, you do. In the UK right now, I believe you're the first person across the pond that I'm telling that to. Yeah, we're in development right now for that, and that's a long game.

**BiTS:** That's absolutely terrific.

**JM:** Thank you. Yeah, stay tuned for that.

**BiTS:** Oh, yes. That's not a problem. That's what I was going to do anyway.

**JM:** Right. Wonderful.

**BiTS:** Okay, let's talk about the new record, which is called "Back For Me". How long was it in production for?

**JM:** Not terribly long. A few months really. Pre-production, which I include in that 'production' category, always starts months before, panning for gold, mining for songs, looking for material, whether it's other people's songs or songs that I'm working on and crafting. Probably two and a half, three months.

**BiTS:** That's not very long at all.

**JM:** In terms of recording, once we get the tracks, once we get the songs decided, then we go in and record, and we always record more than we're going to put out because somebody's got to die. [Laughs] Somebody's got to die, that's the way we put it. Yeah, we always record more than we actually put on the record just because it needs to have a

good flow to it and make the best sense. We never really know what we're going to get until we're done tracking and then make the decisions accordingly.

**BiTS:** I've listened to the record twice and I think it's absolutely fabulous. Although I do have to say that the tracks which I think are outstanding are those where you've got guests playing guitar for you, especially the Jesse Dayton track, which I think is absolutely wonderful.





**JM:** The Jesse Dayton track is fantastic. Thank you. I'm so glad you like it. That's actually a cover of an Irma Thomas song.

**BiTS:** Is it really? I didn't know that.

**JM:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, Irma Thomas.

**BiTS:** Jesse Dayton is making quite a name for himself at the moment.

**JM:** He's doing quite well. He's a label mate at this moment and yeah, he's a very, very strong player, very strong and a great guy.

**BiTS:** Did these people, Sue Foley and Joe Bonamassa as well, come into the studio, or did they, as they put it, send it in by telephone these days?

**JM:** Well, you know it's hard to hit a moving target. Both of those, all three of those guitar players, really, Jesse, Sue Foley and Joe. First of all, they're all friends. Secondly, yeah, hard to hit a moving target. So in Sue's case, we sent her the track almost finished, and she did an overdub while she was on, I don't know, a three or a four-day break from touring. She was home in Austin. And then Joe actually did come into the studio in LA when he literally had a three-day break from tour in New York, and he flew in, came to the studio, did the track and then went back out on tour.

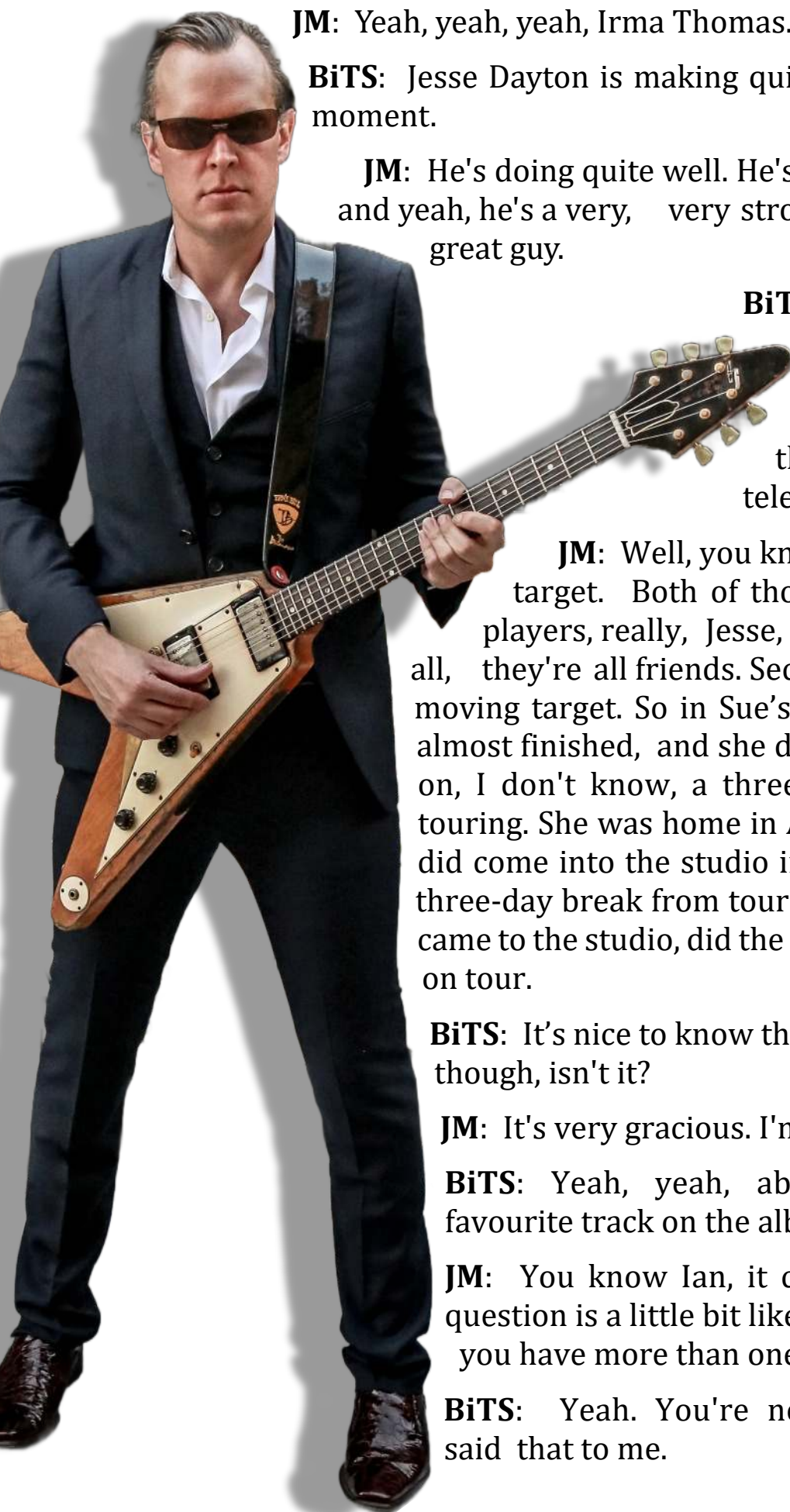
**BiTS:** It's nice to know that people will do that for you though, isn't it?

**JM:** It's very gracious. I'm very, very grateful.

**BiTS:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Do you have a favourite track on the album at all, Janiva?

**JM:** You know Ian, it changes and answering that question is a little bit like choosing a favourite child if you have more than one.

**BiTS:** Yeah. You're not the first person who's said that to me.



**JM:** You might have a favourite child, but you never admit it. You just never admit it. You can't admit it. You take it to the grave. But right now I would say I'm really into the title track. It's just a devastating song 'Back For Me'. I'm looking at the titles and I'm thinking well, wait, no, that one. Wait. No, that one. They're all kind of my favourites, which is how they end up on the record, but I do love the title track very

much. I also love 'The Same Love That Made Me Laugh' quite a bit. I have a funny story about that. While we were doing the mixing, you have to listen to the mixes, or at least I do, kind of everywhere. So I listen on headphones, I listen on earbuds, I listen in the car, I listen on the laptop, I listen all kinds of different places while we're mixing and mastering, to make sure that we're getting what we need.

I was at a big grocery store in the parking lot, and I was in the car, and I pulled into a parking spot and I had 'The Same Love That Made Me Laugh' playing really loud in the car. These two older women, when I pulled up and I was sitting in the parking

[Click here to listen to Janiva's version of 'The Same Love That Made Me Laugh'.](#)

spot for maybe 30 seconds listening before I turned the car off, and these two women that were parked next to me were loading their groceries in the car. And I got out of the car, and they stopped me. They were like, no, no, no. What are you listening to? We need to know what that is. mean, they were having a time, and they just loved it. It was beautiful and a little embarrassing, and they were like, who is that? We need to know who that is. We need to Google her. And I was like, uh, it's ME!.

**BiTS:** That's wonderful.

**JM:** It was a beautiful moment. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. They googled me.

**BiTS:** That's a kind of inspiration to keep on doing the same thing.

**JM:** It was lovely. It was lovely. So I'd say those two, if I had to pick two...I kind of love them all.

**BiTS:** You've done 17 records now and I have got an album which is called "Alligator Records: 50 Years Of Genuine House Music" on which there is a track called, 'That's What Love Will Make You Do', which I think is one of the finest songs you have ever done. I love it.

**JM:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Yeah, that's a Little Milton song.

**BiTS:** I know it is. I'm a huge fan of Little Milton. I loved the way he sang and loved the way he played and it's a great song as well.

**JM:** Listen, I'm sitting in my office, directly across from my desk is an Elks Club, Little Milton poster with his autograph on it. The first time I saw him, I was in my



20s, and it's one of those orange and black old school posters. It's exquisite. It's in a frame.

**BiTS:** That's absolutely wonderful. What a great story. Janiva, it's years, I think 2019, maybe 17 that you last came to the UK. When are you coming back?

**JM:** Well, I'm actually coming back in September, but not for work. My husband is from the UK and we're making a family trip. We're going to go see his folks. Going to go and see the in-laws. Have a visit, and unfortunately, there's no work involved. But I would love to come back and do some shows there. I really, really, really would.

**BiTS:** I think we'd love to see you. I'm going to be playing this new album of yours on my radio shows very regularly

**BiTS:** Okay, let's just move on very slightly. You've just published one album. How soon do you think you're going to be thinking about a new one, or are you already?

**JM:** The answer is B. Already am and here's why. I actually recorded two albums last year. I did "Back For Me", and I also did a live recording with my regular touring



band, sort of a retrospective of some of the, I hate to use the term greatest hits, but it's kind of like that [chuckles]. So we'll be releasing that, I don't know, I just started. Last week I just called the fellows over at the record company and I said, hey, so what are we doing with the live album and when? So I'll be talking with them this week about the rollout on that and getting it mastered, mixing and mastering that live album.

So we did it with Bob Clearmountain (*left*). You may be familiar with him. If you're not it'd be good to like just pop his name in Google. He's a wonderful producer, engineer, mixing master. Very, very renowned and he has a studio in Santa Monica that has a small theatre in it, capacity like 150 people. So we packed in 150 people and did a live show, and he tracked it right there at the studio. So I'm really, really looking forward to that one coming out. But I don't know when that's happening, so stay tuned.

**BiTS:** It sounds absolutely wonderful. I'm really looking forward to that to say the very least. Listen, I'm not going to take any more of your time. Thank you very much indeed for, I guess, getting up pretty early for me so that we can have a little chat and thank you very much indeed for doing this.

**JM:** No problem. I appreciate it, Ian. I appreciate your support, I really mean that. Be sure to let me know when this is published and send me some links and I'll get them out on the socials, so people will know..

# J. B. Lenoir - the 'protest' bluesman

By

John Holmes

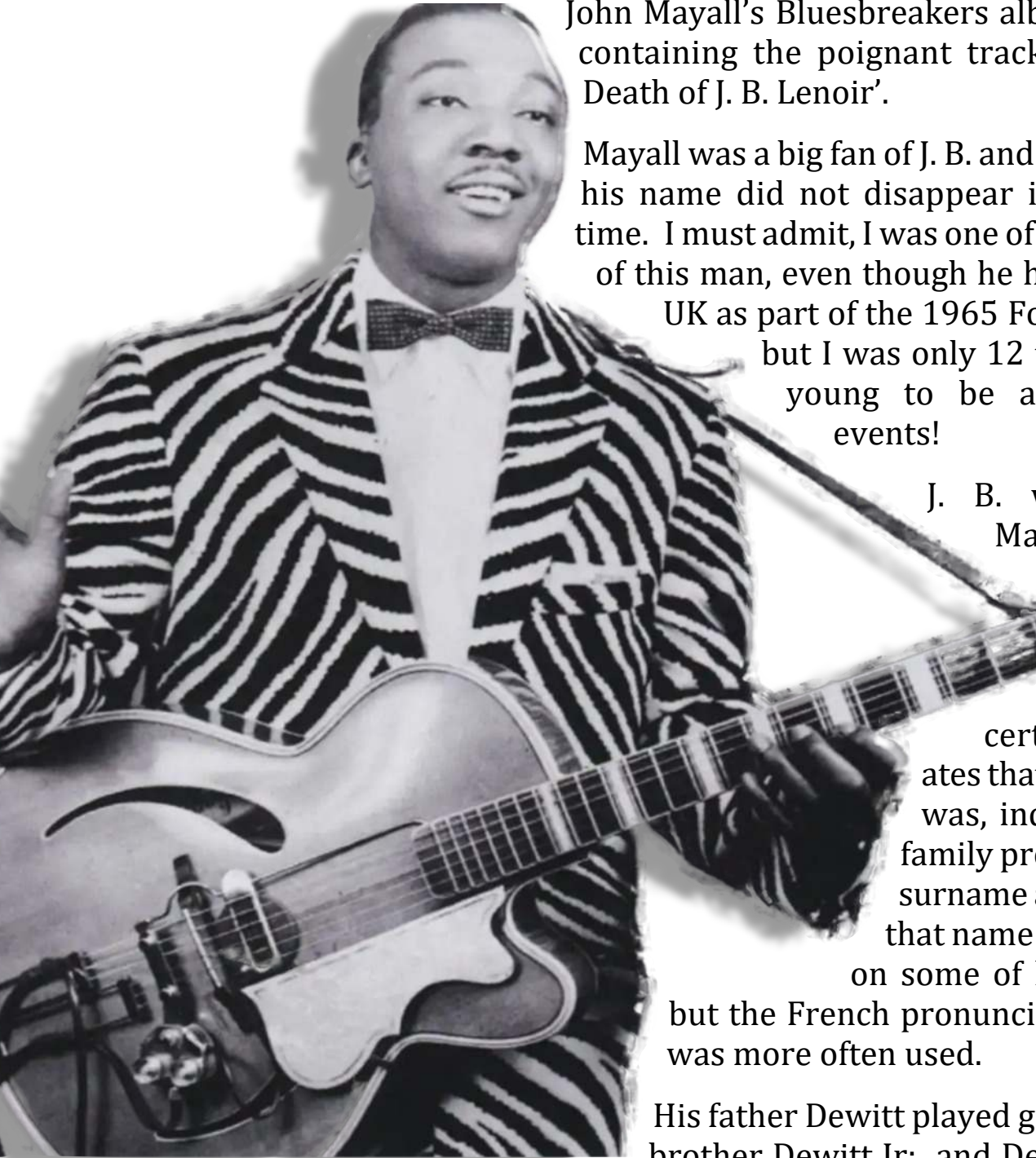
I would hazard a guess that most British blues fans did not become aware of the name J. B. Lenoir until they bought the 1967 John Mayall's Bluesbreakers album "Crusade", containing the poignant track entitled 'The Death of J. B. Lenoir'.

Mayall was a big fan of J. B. and keen to ensure his name did not disappear in the mists of time. I must admit, I was one of those unaware of this man, even though he had been to the UK as part of the 1965 Folk-Blues tour - but I was only 12 then, so a little young to be attending such events!

J. B. was born on March 5th 1929, near Monticello, Mississippi, and his birth certificate indicates that his legal name was, indeed, J. B.! The family pronounced their surname as 'Lenore', and that name even appeared on some of his recordings, but the French pronunciation of Lenoir was more often used.

His father Dewitt played guitar, as did his brother Dewitt Jr; and Dewitt Snr was J. B.'s first music teacher. As an infant, apparently he took delight in hearing his Father play, and not surprisingly this led to a desire to emulate what his Father was doing. He, in turn, taught him folk-blues songs, and particularly some of the repertoire of Blind Lemon Jefferson.

After beginning to explore the music for himself he soon came under the influence of Lightnin' Hopkins and Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup. The Hopkins influence is



particularly noticeable in the lengthy single string runs J. B. incorporated into some of his songs.

In the early to middle 1940s J. B. stated that he spent time in New Orleans, and nearby Algiers, and met and played with both Elmore James and 'Sonny Boy' Williamson II. According to his widow, Ella Louise, he got into a bit of trouble there with the police, thereby necessitating a fairly swift departure. However, he was already aware that many black folks from the Deep South were heading to the Northern cities, so he joined them around the end of the decade, and found himself in Chicago.

He found work in the stockyards and meat packing plants, and played his music at night, as a solo act with an acoustic guitar. Apparently, even acoustically, he was a pretty wild performer, often attired in a zebra-skin coat, tails, and a matching bow-tie (there are various photos of him dressed that way)! Attaching a microphone to a harmonica harness enabled him to perform some on-stage antics, including

(apparently) the duck-walk, which was adopted by Chuck Berry.



By 1950 he had come to the attention of Joe Brown, a local entrepreneur who the previous year had founded the JOB label with blues pianist/vocalist St. Louis Jimmy.

He recorded four songs for the label in 1950, which were leased to Chess, and released as two singles ('Korea Blues/My Baby Told Me' by J. B. & His Bayou Boys, and 'Carrie Lee/Deep In Debt Blues' by J. B. Lenore & His Combo). The songs were quite unusual, firstly due to J. B.'s high-pitched voice, and secondly because his clever lyrics were not the usual found-love/lost-love subjects,

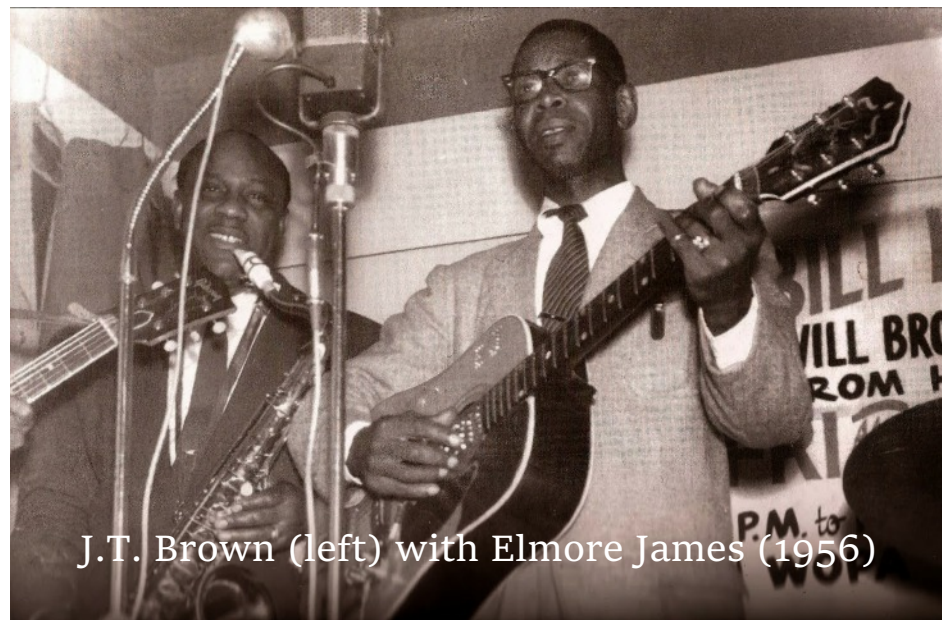
but related to some of the social aspects of the day, particularly those relating to black people.

On these recordings J. B. was backed by 'Sunnyland' Slim on piano, Leroy Foster on electric guitar, and Alfred Wallace on drums. In fact, these musicians worked



regularly with him in the studios for around the next four years, until the end of his JOB contract.

J. B. continued to record for JOB, but the sessions were few and far between, resulting in one single in 1951, one in 1952, and two in 1953. A further single was released in 1957, although it had been recorded in 1951. All of the recordings were released on the JOB label - some as Lenoir, but most as Lenore.



His last JOB session, in January 1953, produced just one J. B. recording, but he apparently spent most of the rest of the day in the studio backing Sunnyland Slim and Johnny Shines, although these recordings stayed 'in the can' until 1967. Incidentally, that last session also featured the sax playing of J. T. Brown, a regular member of the Elmore James band.

In 1954 J. B. moved to Parrot Records, who were attracted by his popularity on the jukeboxes in the city. Continuing his interest in current affairs, at his first Parrot session J. B. recorded the highly controversial Eisenhower Blues, which was issued as Parrot 802, and then hastily withdrawn. The song bemoaned the economic hard times under the Eisenhower presidency, and the words upset quite a few people. J. B. was told at the time that the White House had made an official complaint about the song, but this seems unlikely, and it was probably more the case that radio air time for the song could have been compromised if those in control were offended.

As a result, Parrot boss Al Benson substituted the song for 'Tax Payin' Blues', which was either recorded at the same session, or a later one - that much is not known. However, the two songs are remarkably similar, although neither sound that controversial these days!

Another politically themed song recorded at the Eisenhower Blues session was 'I'm In Korea', which appeared on the B-side of both the original recording and the replacement recording - in fact, both were released as Parrot 802.

His next single was his only R&B chart hit - 'Mama, Talk To Your Daughter', which reached number 11 in 1955, and has been re-recorded many times, by such artistes as John Mayall and Robben Ford.

The 'family' theme was evident in a number of his recordings, with titles such as 'Man, Watch Your Woman', 'Mama, Your Daughter's Going To Miss Me', and 'Mama, What About Daughter' - and there were others!



Parrot Records folded in 1956, but by that time, aware of his popularity in Chicago, the Chess label had come calling in mid-1955, and J. B. signed for them. At the same time they acquired the rights to all his Parrot recordings. Four singles were released on the Chess subsidiary label, Checker, between 1956 and 1958, but none of them achieved a chart placing.

Other recordings remained unreleased until appearing on an LP in the 1970s, and he was usually backed by a small band that included such names as Willie Dixon, and Robert Lockwood Jr. Rather than record material written by Willie Dixon, as most of the Chess artistes did at that time, J. B. insisted on using all original songs, although he did work with Dixon on 'You Shook Me', although he never recorded the song himself.



Rec. August 11, 1958 in Chicago, IL; J.B. Lenoir, voc, g; Junior Wells, hca; Ernest Cotton, ts; Joe Montgomery, p; Jesse Fowler, dr

one in the kitchens of the University of Illinois, in Champaign, Illinois, where he remained until his death.

In 1958 he had left Chess, recorded the one Shad single, and was then out of contract until 1960, when he was taken up by Vee Jay Records, but unfortunately they were unable to provide him with another hit.

In mid-1960 the British blues archivist Paul Oliver was in Chicago, researching for his book 'Conversation With The Blues', and as part of that he recorded J. B. talking about his life, and playing some songs acoustically. Two of these, 'Move To Kansas City' and 'I Been Down So Long' appeared on the Decca LP of the same title as the book, and two other tracks, 'Mojo Boogie' and 'I Don't Care What Nobody Say' were released in the UK as a Blue Horizon single in 1966. I believe these were the first recordings J. B. made as a solo artiste accompanying himself.

In 1963 J. B. recorded a haunting song called 'I Sing Um The Way I Feel', coupled with 'I Feel So Good', which was released on the USA label. The song was apparently

an arrangement of a traditional song, called 'Foxsquirrel'. J. B. had become interested in the sounds of African music, and he called his version of it 'African Hunch'.

I remember the song being on a Sue label blues compilation LP called "Pure Blues Vol 1", which subsequently appeared as a cut price LP, 'This Is Blues', which was on Island Records. Anyway, the single was also released in the UK on the Sue label, and it must have caused something of a stir within the blues fraternity, most of whom didn't like to stray too far from the strict format of the music.

J. B. got the chance to record again in May 1965, and perhaps buoyed up by his solo recordings for Paul Oliver, produced an entire album of his solo acoustic work, entitled "Alabama Blues", which also features Freddy Below on drums. It was

[Click here to see  
and listen to  
Peter Green's  
version of  
'Alabama Blues'.](#)

recorded in Chicago, and produced by Willie Dixon (who still wasn't able to get J. B. to record any of his songs!). The title track is a very poignant song relating to extreme racism in Alabama (which Peter Green also recorded a beautiful acoustic version of a couple of years later). Once again, J. B. used his songs to express his feelings about politics, war, and life in general. The album was initially released just in France, but eventually became widely available. His guitar and

vocal work on this album is, in my opinion, outstanding, playing modern acoustic blues, and it's certainly my favourite of all his work.

By the mid-1960s the blues 'revival' was most definitely under way, no doubt to the relief of many artistes struggling to get by. The annual Lippmann-Rau Folk Blues UK/European tour had been in the calendar since 1962, and these audiences loved the original blues performers.

J. B.'s Sue single, and to a lesser extent (at least initially) the "Alabama Blues" album, created an audience for him in the UK and Europe, and consequently he was added to the line up for the 1965 tour, as part of a very strong bill including John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy, Eddie Boyd, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Walter 'Shaky' Horton, Roosevelt Sykes, Doctor Ross and Big Mama Thornton - it makes your mouth water just thinking about it! J. B. was featured on one track on the resulting album.

In September 1966 J. B. had the chance to record another acoustic album with Freddy Below, again in Chicago, and again with Dixon producing (and again, all self penned material - Willie must have given up by then!). This album, following on from the previous one, contained many songs about black urban life in the USA, which would have been classed as protest songs if they had been sung by a white performer. The two albums were full of very personal songs, so different from what was on offer from most of the blues artistes of the day.

As far as I can tell, the album was initially released posthumously on John Mayall's short lived Crusade label (part of Polydor), and interestingly it also contained a

discussion with his widow, and three tracks J. B. recorded at home in Autumn 1962 for a film by Swedish/American couple, Steve and Ronnag Seaberg. The filming, including the songs, last about 30 minutes, and part of it was included in the 2003 film "Soul of A Man". It is available on You Tube, and is fascinating - J. B.'s speaking voice is as expressive as his singing! It is interesting that he refers to himself as 'Lenore'.

Anyway, the album, less the film tracks, was then released around 1967, as "Down In Mississippi", on the L&R label, amongst other labels, including Bellaphon, in Germany.

In early 1967, J. B.'s car was hit from behind by another vehicle. He was taken to hospital, and then released home, although he noted that he was suffering from double vision and abdominal pain. His last song, written but never recorded, told of his feeling that all was not right with his health, and on April 29th he passed away as a result of an occlusion of a branch of a coronary artery. Although his heart was apparently in good shape for a man of 38, doctors were of the opinion that the car crash caused the damage to his heart. A suit was settled against the driver of the other car for just \$2250, but after lawyers and court deductions his widow and children received just \$1400.

He is buried at the Salem Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery, Jayess, County Lawrence, Mississippi. Apparently, there appears to be some dispute that this is the correct burial site, but photos of the grave are available on line, so I can only assume it is the correct one.

Apart from his original recording of 'The Death of J. B. Lenoir', John Mayall recorded another tribute, entitled 'I'm Gonna Fight For You J. B.'

In 2011 J. B. was inducted into The Blues Hall of Fame.

If J. B. had lived he would likely have taken his place among the premier blues artistes, but his legacy lives on with the re-release of much of his music. In my opinion, two CDs currently still available (I think) cover both the earlier and late parts of his career very well - one is the Jasmine album "I Wanna Play A Little While", which is a double cd of his complete singles collection from 1950 - 1960, plus another twenty additional tracks, either unreleased at the time, or of J. B. backing such as Johnny Shines and Sunnyland Slim. His late work is on an Evidence cd entitled "Vietnam Blues" which comprises the two albums "Alabama Blues" and "Down In Mississippi". I definitely recommend both - especially the latter one!



# THE BITS INTERVIEW: FABRIZIO POGGI

**Fabrizio Poggi (pronounced Pohjee) (born 1 July 1958) is a singer and harmonica player. He is a Grammy Awards nominee who has received the Hohner Lifetime Award, and has been two times Blues Music Awards nominee and a Jimi Awards nominee. He has recorded twenty six albums. He has performed with a wide range of top blues musicians.**

**Ian McKenzie spoke to him at his home in Italy.**

**FP:** Hello.

**BiTS:** Fabrizio. It's Ian McKenzie, Fabrizio. Can you hear me OK?

**FP:** Yes, I can hear you loud and clear.

**BiTS:** That's wonderful. Listen, what I want to do is to talk to you about how you came to be a harmonica player and about the latest record as well.

**FP:** Yeah, yeah, yeah that's fine for me.

**BiTS:** Okay, let's make a start. You've been playing harmonica, or recording harmonica, for more than 20 years. I guess you've been playing for much longer. How did you start to play the harmonica?

**FP:** Well, quoting my good friend and harmonica legend, Charlie Musselwhite, music in general and then blues and harmonica overtook me when I was little. One of my favourite toys was a drum, a toy piano and, of course, an out of tune harmonica. Then one day I saw Paul Butterfield playing 'Mystery Train' in a movie called The Last Waltz, and my life changed forever.





**BiTS:** [Laughs] That's wonderful. Did you learn just by listening to other people and trying to copy them?

**FP:** No, [chuckles] maybe nowadays it seems a little strange, but here in northern Italy in those times, no one was playing blues harmonica and most of the things I learned in my younger days came from records. There were no computers, Google or YouTube and musical instructional books were very difficult to find. So it took



me six months to learn something that today a kid can learn, probably in one day [chuckles]. Also, with the English language was the same. I always make a joke of it but my English teachers at the time were Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf [laughs].

**BiTS:** So how did you learn about things like cross harp and the various ways, what are called positions of play? How did you actually learn that?

**FP:** I was desperate. All my friends at the bar said to me, Fabrizio, why do you want to learn how to play harmonica? Maybe it's better if you learn to play guitar or drums

because everybody knows. And I was almost close to quitting because it seems strange nowadays, but at the time I was thinking to myself, maybe it's because in Italy they don't sell the right harmonicas to play the blues. Probably in US or UK, they have different harmonicas.

So I remember, long story short, I remember one night I went to a jam session just to listen to live music and there was a great guitar player. So at the end of the show I went close to the stage, fighting with myself, because I was very, very, very shy, and said to him, oh, you did a great job. I love your guitar playing and he asked me, are you a musician too? I said, oh no, I'm just trying to play this little harmonica but it's difficult because probably it's not the right instrument. And he said to me, no, no, your harmonica, there's nothing wrong. It's because of the position. The cross position, and he wrote me some information on the napkins at the bar.

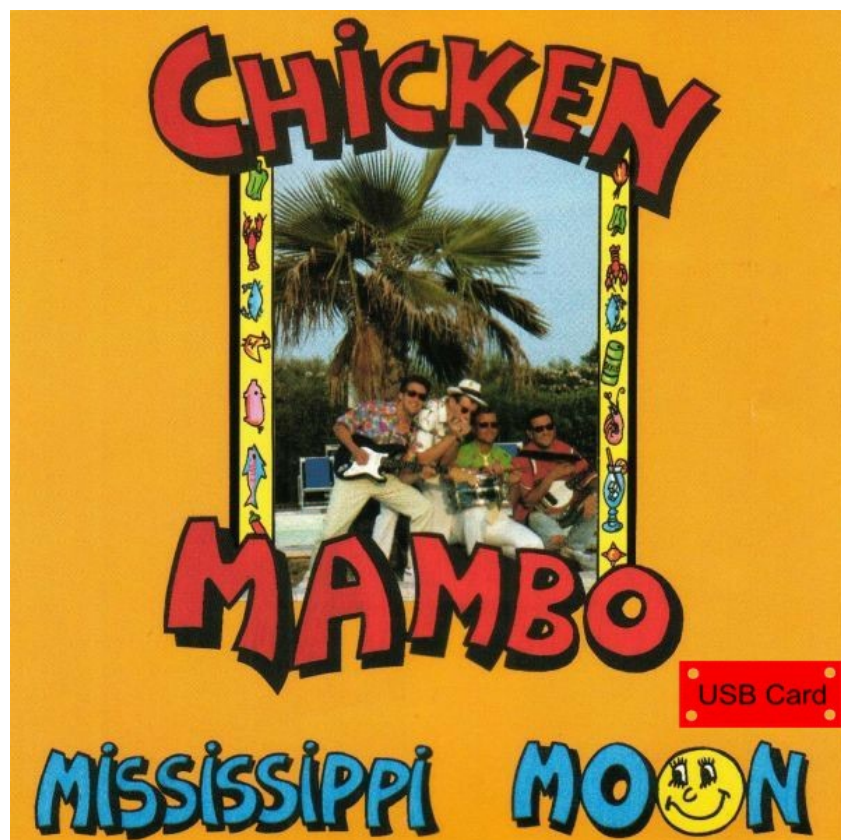
So if the band play in E, you have to use a harmonica in A. Well, I came back home. I didn't see the light right away, but my harmonica began to sound a little bit more blues [chuckles] and I was happy. And also some obsession, a good obsession. I remember waking up in the middle of the night and saying to myself, wow, I

understand how to bend that note. Then I saw the clock and said, oh, it's 3:00 AM. It's better to wait until tomorrow morning. If not, my mother was not very happy. It was hard. You have to have a lot of passion.

**BiTS:** Did you find it quite exciting to learn to play?

**FP:** Yes, very exciting because I was really an outsider. I didn't want to go to school, so at 14, I went to work in a factory. I didn't have so many friends then. I worked in shifts, so I had a lot of anger, a lot of sadness, and music and harmonica helped me a lot at that time because music at the time, and harmonica too, really were the soundtrack of my life in a small town.

**BiTS:** I don't know what town it was that you were brought up in. Where in Italy were you actually brought up?



**FP:** I still live in the same town I was born and grew up in and it's 45 minutes south of Milan in northern Italy. Also, a big city like Milan was on the other side of the moon, you know what I mean? Well, we all discovered blues music through the British musicians, Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton. Maybe a little later John Mayall. It took me years to discover Muddy Waters and years to discover Robert Johnson and so on. So it was very slow, everything, but in some ways, the fact that it was really step by step, my passion grew a lot because you have this dream in some way to emulate these musicians that

you were listening to on the records. So maybe the fact that it was really slow to learn everything, make you grow up in a better way, not only as a musician but also as a human being.

**BiTS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**FP:** I don't know if you know what I mean, because sometimes my English can be very, very, very poor [chuckles].

**BiTS:** [Laughs] It sounds okay to me. Tell me something about the first band that you recorded with. Chicken Mambo, I think it was called.

**FP:** Yeah, yeah. Well, at that time, all the bands have important names, so The Fabulous Three, Lil Jim, and The Thunderbirds. So I wanted to stay humble, so I say why not Chicken Mambo? It sounds very musical as a name, and it was something

that I catch from Howlin' Wolf records. He was asking you to do your chicken mambo with your guitar playing like the sound of a chicken. It's like, wow, Chicken Mambo! It was something that was catchy, but most of the club owners in the beginning, called me and ask me how many female dancers do you have in the band because they thought that we were a Latin music band.

**BiTS:** Oh, I see. Yes.

**FP:** [Chuckles] So, how many dancers do you have in the band? Well, we don't have any dancers, but if you want, we will try to move in a nice way.

**BiTS:** You've made a number of records with Chicken Mambo, including I think, quite delightfully, one called 'Song For Angelina', who is your lady at home. Did you learn a lot about making records? Were you involved in the production of any of those records?

**FP:** Well, in the beginning, we all in the band, we were not satisfied with our records because our music doesn't sound at all like the ones we used to listen to on the records, and we don't know why. We changed studio and studio, and we brought with us tons of LPs to show to the engineer, and until I went to Texas and I recorded an album there, and then I understand that it was 50% us and 50% the engineer.

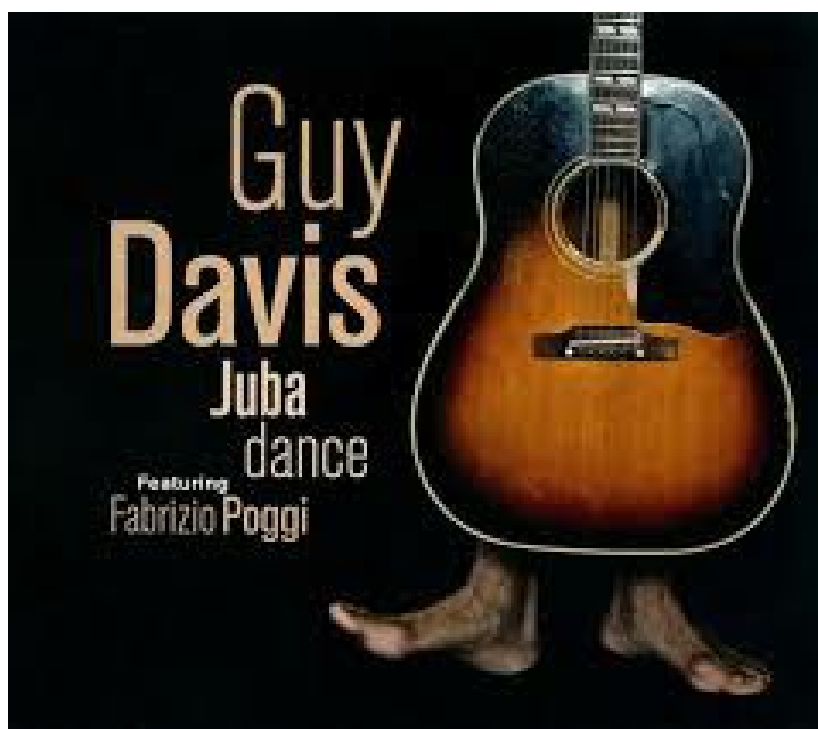
**BiTS:** Yeah.

**FP:** I remember the sound engineer in Texas said to me, your record has nothing wrong Fabrizio, the only difficulty is the sound engineer is a sound engineer for pop music, and you want to play blues and roots music and folk music. And there, step by step, I started to understand how to produce my records. Nowadays, I'm quite satisfied with my records.

**BiTS:** Tell me how "Juba Dance" came along. That's the first time that I came across you, of course, was when "Juba

Dance" came out, the album that you made with Guy Davis, which incidentally, I still play on my radio show. I think it's great. How did that come about? How did it happen?

**FP:** Well, I met Guy Davis at a festival in Italy, and we discovered that we were really brothers from other mothers. So between us was born almost immediately, a deep friendship based not only on mutual respect, but also about the passion that we both have for the acoustic folk blues. So at a certain point, I came out with the idea to produce an album together and so "Juba Dance" was born. We recorded it in a couple



of days with just a few takes, and there in that studio with “Juba Dance”, we became really brothers. Really blues brothers and we came together first in Europe, continental Europe, then UK, then in the States, then in Canada and Guy Davis did a lot to me. In some way he gave me the degree at the University of Blues. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm not joking. I'm serious about this.

**BiTS:** [Laughing] That's a really lovely expression. I love it.

**FP:** [Chuckles] Thanks. Because when I was playing at Guy's side, I can feel that the blues was in him. Probably, he'd say, oh, no, no, I'm just a performer. Just a blues player but I'm not a bluesman. But probably the blues is in his DNA. Also, if Guy himself doesn't want to admit it [chuckles] because he always jokes, “Oh, I'm from New York City, the only cotton I picked up was my underwear when my mother was yelling at me when



I was a teenager.” But he really has the blues inside deep and big and huge.

**BiTS:** You made a few records in between, but then a little later on in 2017, you made “Sonny and Brownie's Last Train”. I have to say I'm a great lover of Sonny and Brownie. I saw them many times live and I've always been delighted, particularly with Sonny Terry's playing. It was such a shame when they broke up, especially under the conditions when they broke up, not speaking to one another. What made you want to do that album?

**FP:** We have to thank Angelina because the idea for the album came from Angelina. One night, she told me, I've seen you and Guy playing together many, many times, and of course, I love it when you play together. And so I think that you two need to do a record dedicated to Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Nobody has done it yet, so you have to do it. You and Guy are the right musicians to do the record. But Guy, in the beginning, was not so happy. He said, I don't think that the world needs a tribute to Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, but I said to Guy, “Okay, you live in New York. I live with my wife. So please let's do the record over here.” So Guy and I stayed for two days in a recording studio in Milan and recorded all the songs live in the studio. We don't have much time, so we also rehearsed all the songs in the studio. I always made a joke and said, our album has the same budget that The Rolling Stones had for their breakfast during the recording of “Blue & Lonesome” [laughs]. But we put there all our passion, love and respect for those two wonderful musicians. Sometimes during the recordings, I felt like that Sonny and Brownie were



seated in the studio with me and Guy, looking at us and smiling at us, sometimes also making fun of us.

**BiTS:** You mentioned earlier on Fabrizio, Charlie Musselwhite, but who are your favourite harmonica players? Who are the artists that you admire most as harp players?

**FP:** Oh, there are a lot, and I change every day. Of course, Charlie, Paul Butterfield, Sonny Boy Williamson 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. James Cotton was a huge influence to me, but also Noah Lewis or Big Walter Horton and Little Walter too, of course. But also sometimes

I hear some unknown harmonica player, and I say, oh, I like it. So they change almost every day. One day my favourite is Sonny Boy [No 2]. The other day it is Sonny Terry.

**FP:** Actually, I forgot to say that also Paul Jones and The Blues Band were a huge influence. I remember that album called "Ready" [chuckles]. I had to buy a second copy because the first one was worn out.

**BiTS:** Fabrizio, tell me something about "Healing Blues". It's been out for a year now, but I gather that it's going quite well.

**FP:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. The album is an ideal, a model

following "Basement Blues" that continues my research in my archives, and also, I added some new songs recorded for the occasion. So I discovered that I have a lot of material live with Guy and some radio recordings.

Then I met a couple of years ago, Sharon (Shar) White, who is the backup singer for Eric Clapton. So I decide to put things together. I had the strong idea that blues is healing music from the very beginning. It took me 20 or 26, albums to get here, because I always wanted to call an album "Blues Is Healing". But then, during the production, the title changed. I really think it's true that blues is a miracle if you think about it, and blues is healing, is a medicine to sooth your soul. Blues is special music and it's a powerful medicine to heal all sadness, so we really need it and probably now more than ever.

**BiTS:** A lady is reported to have said to Buddy Guy once that she didn't listen to blues because it was all sad music and he invited her to go to a show of his and he played something or other. I don't know what he played, but after it he spoke to her again and she was convinced that it is not just sad music. A lot of people are put off



by the fact that they think it's miserable stuff, but it's really not. It's the power of life that's in there.

**FP:** Yeah, yeah, I agree completely. The real sadness is not sad music. Maybe sometimes the lyrics say, oh, I'm sad, and, I feel sad and blue. But it's a way to get out of something, you get depression out of yourself through the music. It's a very special music that, as I say, needs respect and it's not pure entertainment. It is so much more.

**BiTS:** Yes, Fabrizio, yes it certainly is. Tell me what your plans for the future are. Are you planning another record, or what are you doing with yourself?

**FP:** Who knows? I don't always like to [laughs] talk too much for the future because it's bad luck. I prefer to stay quiet. But I'm always thinking about things to do. Collaboration with the musician that I admire, and so as I say, stay tuned and I will be with something new very soon [chuckles].

**BiTS:** Okay, listen, I won't take any more of your time. Thank you very much indeed for speaking with me. It's been a delight. I hope that everything works out well for you and give your lovely, lovely wife, Angelina a kiss from me, or something because I think she's been very helpful for setting this up. Absolutely wonderful.

**FP:** Angelina, in Italian translates to little angel, so she really is a little angel.

**BiTS:** Yes, of course. Okay, well listen, I won't take any more of your time. Thank you very much indeed for speaking with me and have a wonderful rest of the day.

**FP:** Thanks to you. Thanks a lot.

**BiTS:** Bye.

**FP:** Bye for now. Bye.



***FABRIZIO POGGI WITH GUY DAVIS***

**Jammin'  
@JAM**

BiTS: Bye.

# A Song Through Time – ‘Bottle Up And Go’

by

Mat Walklate

‘Bottle Up And Go’ is a traditional Blues song, with roots extending back in to the 19th Century. It was recorded many times between the 1930s and the 1960s, by a diverse range of Blues musicians.

It has a 12-bar form, but not the typical AAB lyric, instead being a ‘chorus’ song with a repeated refrain over bars 5–12, preceded each time by a different couplet in the first four bars.

Identifiable precursors are ‘Hesitation Blues’ and ‘The Duck’s Yas Yas Yas’. ‘Hesitation Blues’ shares the same couplet and chorus form. A version was published by W. C. Handy and it was first recorded by the Victor Military Band in 1916. Leadbelly and Reverend Gary Davis both recorded the song, and Jim Jackson’s 1930 recording is particularly good.

 [Jim-Jackson-Hesitation-Blues-Clip](#)

Later versions by Dave Van Ronk, Janis Joplin and Hot Tuna use a lyric shared by many iterations of ;

‘Bottle Up And Go’: “A nickel is a nickel...”

‘The Duck’s Yas Yas Yas’ is an 8-bar Blues that contains the line, “Mama bought a rooster, thought it was a duck” that became a common feature of Bottle Up And Go, where Mama buys or kills a chicken, thinks it’s a duck and puts it on the table with its legs sticking up.

 [Ducks-Yas-Yas-James-Stump-Johnson-Clip](#)

James “Stump” Johnson was the first to record ‘The Duck’s Yas Yas Yas’ in 1929.

The earliest release on disc of the song in question was as ‘Bottle It Up And Go’ by The Memphis Jug Band in 1932.

 [Memphis-Jug-Band-Clip](#)

The first verse:

*I love my baby and she loves me too, I don’t give a gosh-darned what she do.*

*We gotta bottle it up and go x2*

*Now high-powered mama, your daddy got the water on.*





An earlier, unrelated Memphis Jug Band song had a reference to Daddy drawing the bath water. The accepted definitions of 'to bottle up and go' seem to be to leave, either spontaneously or unexpectedly, to make a swift exit after a disagreement, or to flee a bad situation without anyone realising you've scarpered.

Apart from the chorus, the Memphis Jug Band recording doesn't share any lyrics with subsequent versions. Each successive interpreter has made the song their own, creating new couplets or using some of the 'floating verses' that bob around in the sea of Blues for all to fish out.



John Lee Williamson ( Sonny Boy Williamson I ) recorded his take on 'Bottle It Up And Go' in 1937. It shares the same chorus as the previous piece.

 [John-Lee-Williamson-Clip](#)

A duck makes an appearance, but he isn't confused with a chicken:

*"Now I had a little duck, and I named him Jim.*

*I put him on the pond just to see him swim."*

A better known recording was made by Mississippian, Tommy McClennan in Chicago in 1939. It contains themes which crop up time and again in later recordings:



 [Tommy-McLennan-Clip](#)

*Now she may be old, ninety years.*

*She ain't too old for to shift them gears.*

*She got to bottle it up and go X 2*

*Now them high-powered women, sure got to bottle it up and go.*

*Now a nickel is a nickel, a dime is a dime.*

*Don't need no girl if she want wine.*

*Now my mama killed a chicken, she thought it was a duck.*

*She put him on the table with the legs stickin' up.*

There's also a 'scat' verse, which many versions include.



McClennan alternates "bottle it up and go" with "bottle up and go". His is an energetic and vibrant rendition. He interjects spoken asides and often plays the refrain on guitar instead of singing it.

Leadbelly laid down several cuts of the song in the early 1940s.

 [Leadbelly-Clip](#)

In a couple of them, he proffers an explanation of the term, "high-powered women"

“High-powered women. That means a woman when she’s high-powered, she can drive a car, she can do most anything. ’cause you know, women now, make the news. They make the news, and if you make ’em mad, they blow out your fuse! And when I mean they can drive a car, they can drive the airplane, they can do everything sorta like a man. So now, I’m gonna bottle up and go for the women, because they’re great women, way I think about it.”

His recordings contain the lines about nonagenarians and ‘gallicide’ but in his, “Nickel is a nickel”, he “Need no girl if she want mine.”

He sings “bottle up and go”, not “bottle it up.” , though for some reason the Archive Of Folk Music album lists the song as, ‘Burrow Love And Go’.

In 1942 Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee gave us ‘Step It Up And Go’:



[Sonny-Terry-Brownie-McGhee-Clip](#)

Their “Nickel” verse:

*A nickel is a nickel, a dime is a dime.*

*Got to have a girl to have a good time.*



Blind Boy Fuller also contributed a ‘Step It Up And Go’ slightly earlier in 1940.



[Blind-Boy-Fuller-Clip](#)

Here’s one of his verses:

*Front door shut, back one too.*

*Blind pulled down, now what you gonna do?*

*You got to step it up and go, yeah and go.*

*Well you can’t stay and pet it, I declare you got to step it up and go.*



Fellow Piedmont musician and friend of Fuller’s, Richard Trice, created ‘Pack It Up And Go’ in 1947.

It’s vocally and stylistically indebted to Fuller, but shares no lyrics with those he sang.



[Richard-Trice-Clip](#)

Verse one:

*Well, I’m going to sing this song.*

*Goin’ away, I won’t be long.*



*I got to pack it up and go, yes and go.*

*Said my best girl quit me, sure got to pack it up and go.*

Interestingly, one verse has a direct reference to homosexuality:

*Well I know a little boy, said he don't like girls.*

🔊 *Painted face, wore his hair all curled.*

Two years later, Big John Greer produced a Rhythm & Blues rendition of the song.



🔊 [Big-John-Greer-Clip](#)

It's 'Bottle It Up And Go' again, this time, with Arkansas-born Greer contributing forceful tenor sax and vocals. It contains the three, 'stock' verses (Grandma, nickels, chickens).

🔊 He complains that he, "Need no girl if she wants wine" which is ironic as he died from alcoholism. Perhaps he wanted the wine for himself?



B.B. King got in on the act in 1952, with 'Shake It Up And Go'.

[BB-King-Clip](#)

There are only three vocal verses, and two of them are 'standard'. Mr King slips into "bottle up and go" on all of them.

In the same year, in California, Little Willie Cotton recorded a stylistically similar, but lyrically different cut.



🔊 [Little-Willie-Cotton](#)

He sings four verses. This is the first:

*Well I had a little girl, she little and low.*

*She used to love me, but she don't no more.*

*She shook it up and go X2*

*Well she shook it up and go, boys, she shook it up and go.*

It does share a verse with the Blind Boy Fuller take:

*Well the front door shut, back door too.*

*Blinds pulled down, what you gonna do.*

In 1961 Dr Harry Oster recorded Snooks Eaglin in New Orleans, for Prestige/Bluesville.



🔊 [Snooks-Eaglin-Clip](#)

Eaglin was born in The Crescent City in 1936, and he was a sophisticated and accomplished urban Blues musician who contributed superb electric guitar to many recordings. I suspect Dr Oster may have encouraged him to play acoustic to better fit the folk aesthetic. Either way, his 12-string sounds



fantastic. All the usual verses are here, and it's back to 'Bottle up and go.' He answers his 'nickel' line with, "Come on pretty baby, let's buy some wine."

Finally, for this segment, K. C. Douglas' 1960s waxing.



 [KC-Douglas-Clip](#)

Douglas was born in Mississippi. He moved to California in 1945, where Chris Strachwitz sought him out to make an album for Bluesville. They really embraced the concept of stereo recording on this one.

## *John Lee Hooker*

I thought I'd deal with John Lee Hooker's versions separately.



He first recorded, 'Bundle Up And Go' for VeeJay in Chicago in 1958.

 [John-Lee-Hooker-1958](#)

Accompanied by bass and drums, he sings of nickels and chickens and " You may be old, you may be grey, you ain't too old for to shift them gears."

The first verse answers the 'nickel' line with "A house full of children and ne'er one mine." Rather than 'high-powered' women, John Lee has a 'high pile of women'.

In 1959 he recorded two versions. A solo, acoustic, Bundle Up And Go, and a rocking, 'You Gotta Shake It Up And Go' with horns and a rhythm section:

 [John-Lee-Hooker-1959-1](#)

 [John-Lee-Hooker-1959-2](#)

Here, he includes a 'scat' verse and alternates his 'high pile of women' with high-powered ones.

In 1965 John Lee Hooker recorded his only album for the Impulse label. On this slow, brooding, masterful version he is backed by an alert, sympathetic Jazz rhythm section.

 [John-Lee-Hooker-1965-Clip](#)

Finally, in 1971 Hooker made the album, "Hooker N Heat". On it, he recorded a version of 'Bottle Up And Go' with Al Wilson on piano:

 [John-Lee-Hooker-1971-Clip](#)

The list above is by no means exhaustive or complete, but hopefully it illustrates the flexibility and variety of forms and themes in Blues.



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# REVIEWS



## CLARE FREE *Butterflies*

### Clare Free—Butterflies—Independent Release

Clare Free is well known on the British Blues circuit both as a Singer/Songwriter and a astute guitarist. She has been nominated for many music awards and toured Europe extensively.

Having been originally released in 2014 and then withdrawn Clare has now re-released her album, “Butterflies” but only in CD format. This reflects her decision to move away from digital releases in favour of a deeper, and more meaningful connection with her fans. So in order to get to hear this album you will have to contact Clare via her website, [www.clarefree.co.uk](http://www.clarefree.co.uk).

The album opens with ‘Thank You’ a nice and gentle acoustic offering with guitar, light percussion and a sweet vocal arrangement. The title track ‘Butterflies’ floats along nicely before we hear a hint of Linda Perry in the vocal in ‘Vagabond Sanctuary’.

‘For My Child’ has a more bluesy gospel feel whilst ‘He’s Your Brother’ relays a personal tale in a twelve bar blues style format. ‘My Dad’ completes a little personal triptych of songs with its light blues touch.

‘Sixty Years Young’ opens with a great bluesy riff and carries the bluesy vibe throughout. ‘Smile And Say Goodbye’ is a lovely heartfelt slow minor blues where Clare can excel and show off her blues guitar chops. The album closes with ‘We Found Home’ a beautiful song that is guaranteed to chill you out!

The album is well put together with simple but effective song arrangements. Her light touch on guitar coupled with sweet vocal arrangements makes for easy listening and somewhat reminiscent of the style of artists such as Madeleine Peyroux and Carla Bruni.

Whilst not strictly a blues album there is no hiding Clare’s blues pedigree particularly in her guitar work and I’m sure blues fans will enjoy this album. I can only admire Clare for her stance against streaming and the current music climate and wish her well with this release.

**Ged Wilson**





## Alice Armstrong—Fury & Euphoria —Independent Release

Alice Armstrong does not need any introduction as she is currently riding high on the blues scene both here in the UK and worldwide on the back of her multi award winning performances and accolades. “Fury & Euphoria” is the second chapter of a trilogy of studio recorded EP’s.

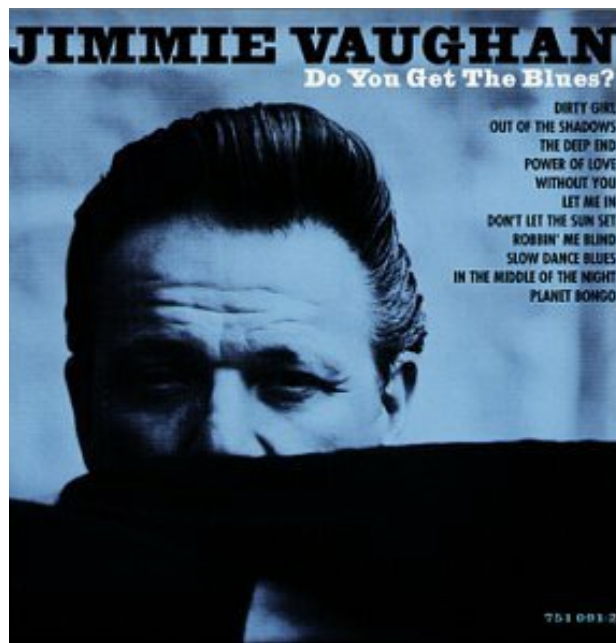
‘Persephone (intro)’ opens the album with a heavily effected soundscape layered beneath Alice’s sweet but haunting voice. ‘Punchline’ is a harder hitting blues offering with a more gritty vocal. ‘Good Love’ is an upbeat foot tapping blues groove with bite and a searing guitar solo underpinned with some tasty Hammond organ.

‘Bombshell’ has an upbeat staccato jazz feel that is somewhat reminiscent in style to Amy Winehouse. ‘Scratching Walls’ has another powerful vocal groove whilst her vocal on the Sonny Bono tune, ‘Bang Bang’ really captures the drama of this cover. The album closes with the powerful slow blues ‘Autoassassin’.

This album is well produced with well crafted songs and good musicianship throughout. I particularly liked the way the guitar work blended with the Hammond organ sounds. Alice undoubtedly has a fantastic voice and a vocal range from sweet to full on growl. Alice creates all her own artwork too so she is indeed an artist with many talents.

Whilst this type of blues rock is not strictly my bag I can appreciate that many people out there will really enjoy this and I urge you to give it a spin or better still go and catch Alice live.

**Ged Wilson**



## Jimmie Vaughan—Do You Get The Blues?—The Last Music Company

Jimmie Vaughan is of course an American blues artist of long standing. Perhaps made his name with the Fabulous Thunderbirds and despite being overshadowed by his brother Stevie Ray at times he is none the less a top guitarist in his own right.

Sadly the original release of this album on 11th September 2001 was completely overshadowed by tragic world events so here we are with a 25th anniversary reissue.

The album opens with 'Dirty Girl' a typical Jimmie Vaughan blues shuffle with his signature guitar licks. 'Out Of The Shadows' is a nice rocking blues whilst 'The Deep End' features some slide guitar from Jimmie and neat harp work from James Cotton. 'The Power Of Love' hits familiar slow blues territory enhanced by Lou Ann Barton on vocals. 'Without You' is a nice laid back blues with some gentle Hendrix style wah wah guitar going on.

'Let Me In' is an upbeat foot tapping blues rocker whilst 'Don't Let The Sun Set' has a nice cool jazzy feel thanks to Herman Green on flute, really liked this one. 'Robbin' Me Blind' is a straightforward blues shuffle whilst 'Slow Dance Blues' is an instrumental featuring Greg Piccolo on tenor sax. Jimmie is joined once again by Lou Ann Barton on vocals and the Double Trouble rhythm section no less on the Johnny Guitar Watson cover, 'In The Middle Of The Night'. The album closes with a swing instrumental 'Planet Bongo' which as you would expect features bongos and some flute which was reminiscent of early Blodwyn Pig/Jethro Tull.

This is a fine blues album with top quality musicians on show and I really like the way the B-3 organ work from Bill Willis holds it all together. Needless to say Jimmie's guitar work is exemplary throughout with his distinctive understated style. In a world of pushing boundaries and experimentation sometimes it's nice just to have something familiar and comforting to warm your soul. So blues fans if you missed this album first time around now is a good time to revisit and check it out.

## Ged Wilson



## **The Name Droppers—Cool Blue Shoes—Horizon Music Group**

The Connecticut based band consists of: Bobby T. Torello; drums, Scott Spray; bass, Ron Rifkin; keyboards and Rafe Klein; lead vocals and guitar. They are now on this, their fifth album release. The ten numbers here are a mixture of original compositions and covers.

The opener is Howlin' Wolf's 'Killing Floor'; this version is a thoughtful, gently paced roller, with a definite toe-tapping laid back approach. This cool, rolling groove is continued with 'Cool Blue Shoes', the slowly enticing saxophone of Joe Meo and added vocals from Carole Sylvan underpins the gently rolling piano.

'Be Alright', is a comforting soul infused, shuffler with guest vocalist Simone Brown supplying a very fine vocal and a sweet saxophone feel from Bill Holloman.

The acoustic guitar and bubbling keyboard intro on 'Keep Pushin'', leads into an energetic rocker with Simone Brown adding her voice for good measure.



'That's The Way My Love Is', from Foreigner's Michael Leslie Jones. This is an enjoyably upbeat keyboard-led love song.

'Hard Way', is a rocking tale of deceit and desertion, he thinks it's her, but he's the one on the run. Willie Dixon's 'I Cry For You', is here, a gently rocking and toe-tapping love song.

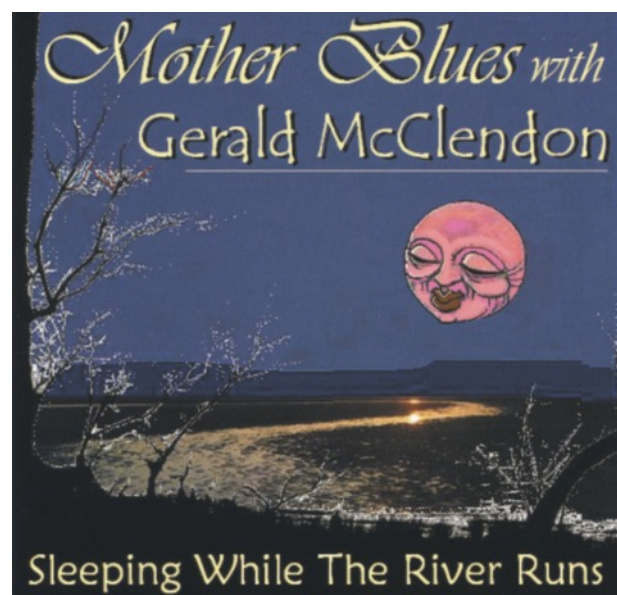
'Think Yiddish', is a tale of overdosing on America and its dietary offers, apparently, thinking Yiddish and dressing English is the only remedy.

'Yes I Will', is a nicely rocking, call and response goodtime roller with splendidly enticing guitar work.

'Out Of The Blue', is a very pleasant ode to love, with a doo-wop duet from Rafe Klein and Simone Brown, underpinned by a burning organ and soulful saxophone from Bill Holloman.

Recommended!

**Brian Harman.**



**Mother Blues with Gerald McClendon—  
Sleeping While The River Runs —Sleeping Dog  
Records SDRCD10003**

Originally released in 2005, it, has now been reissued in recognition Mr McClendon's recent "Bobby 'Blue' Bland" award from The Jus' Blues Music Foundation.

Gerald McClendon; vocals, Steve Bramer; guitars, bass, keyboards, and percussion, Gordon Patriarcha; bass, Gikas Marks and Jim Barklay; drums, Jerry Soto; keyboards, Hurtin' Burt; harmonica, horns; Baabe Irving, and Carole Baskin, Lara Jenkins and LaShann McNicholas on backing vocals.

The seventeen numbers open with 'Pass You By' an understated, emotion fuelled soulful tale of life and the deceitful people you meet in life. 'Smokescreen', explains that life is not what it seems, a rich guitar and organ underpins all while the warm mellow vocals and bass on 'Keep You from Harm', exude the love and protection of fatherhood.

Energetic harmonica and picked guitar on 'Leaves Tremble on the Tree', accentuate the hardships of life. The achingly, loving ballad 'Going Down for the Last Time', has Gerald pleading to save a relationship.

The upbeat 'Common Ground' tells of drifting people and drifting love. The slow burning organ of 'Bed Down', allows Gerald to deliver a stark emotional tale of spiralling love and gambling.



The enticing, gospel fuelled 'Sleep While The River Runs', urges, not to despair, there is still hope. 'Come to Me', is a pleasingly, optimistic shuffle.

The inviting slow blues of 'Thin Line' warns of going too far with people's emotions.

Two instrumentals are the smooth Jazz inflected 'Me & Ian' and 'Where's The Fire' a fine funkier with splendid bouncing harmonica.

The enticing 'Glory Train' is a splendid call and response gospeller. While 'Chalk Line', is a tale of a fatal affair.

The guitar fuelled 'Habit of The Heart', is a serious, floor duster while 'Walk With Me', is a driving blues with serious slide.

'Sleep While The River Runs', (reprise) is a splendid choral rendition from the Halstead Street National Uptown Choir.

Highly Recommended!

**Brian Harman.**



**Kent Burnside—Hill Country Blood—Strolling Bones Records SB56 CD**

The grandson of Hill Country legend R.L. Burnside, has been playing with his own band for the best part of twenty years and prior to that he spent time as guitarist in Jimbo Mathus' post-Squirrel Nut Zippers band for the better part of 2005 and 2006, during that time he has also, been a featured artist at Buddy Guy's Club Legends.

The album features two covers; John Lee Hooker's 'Crawling King Snake' and Junior Kimbrough's 'You Better Run'.

The musicians are; Kent; guitar and vocals, his uncle, Garry Burnside; bass, Jake Best; drums and Damian Pearson; harmonica. The album was recorded at the legendary Memphis Studios.

The opener is 'Daddy Told Me', a sensitive, mellow haunting guitar plays while Kent's delicate soul infused vocals entice you in. On 'Hill Country Blood', the music embodies the atmosphere of his childhood. As the raw, haunting lyrically stinging guitar, matches his sublime, enticing vocals. With 'Crawling King Snake', the prowling, echo filled raw guitar and harmonica atmosphere, immerses you, into the music.

On 'I Heard', there is a definite danger filled ambience within the Hendrix fuelled guitar work. The enticing music inexorably, entwines within you, whilst 'I Go Crazy', is the threat from a spurned lover; a raw burning, harmonica joins the richly deep dark menacing guitar on the prowl.

The soul infused 'One More Chance', is a splendid gentle guitar and harmonica plea for forgiveness and 'Rob And Steal', is quite simply, a great percussion and bass driven Hill Country stomper.

'I Can Feel It', is a tender, slowburn, pleading guitar driven, love ballad.

'You Better Run', is a stark, menacingly dark, guitar fuelled warning.

'Miss You', is an acoustic guitar and slowly wailing harmonica driven tale of melancholy and bitter loss.

Highly Recommended!

**Brian Harman.**



### **Garry Burnside—It's My Time Now—Strolling Bones Records SB52 CD**

Garry Burnside is the youngest son of legendary Hill Country bluesman R.L. Burnside.

Garry, spent his musical apprenticeship with his father, Junior Kimbrough and later worked with the North Mississippi All-Stars Hill Country Revue. He has also worked with his brother Duwayne Burnside and Grammy winning nephew Cedric Burnside and artists such as Jesse Mae Hemphill, Bobby Rush, Iggy Pop, Kid Rock amongst others.

The band are Garry; guitar and vocals, Andrea Stanton; rhythm guitar, Pinky Pulliam; bass and Avery Dilworth on drums. The album was recorded at the Royal Studio in Memphis.

According to Garry the album was actually recorded five years ago.

The album consists of eleven numbers that are a subtle mixture of Blues, Rock and Jazz. Opening with the guitar driven jazz funkier 'High', it is the first of three instrumentals, the mellow and slow burning, haunting 'Bad Luck City' and a steady rolling wah, wah infused 'AGF Out' which slides down to gentle picking and then rises up and satisfyingly rocks out.

'Young Country Boy', delivers a confidently electrifying, rocking blues, with strong percussive backing. 'It's My Time Now', continues this rocking blues theme and on 'Hanging In There', John C. Stubblefield provides the bass, for this infectious, chant infused stinging guitar rocker.

'Ramblin' is a steady, infectiously rocking, boogie concerning emotional turbulence, while 'Holdin' My Woman', is a lively, guitar picking tale about losing one's girlfriend. 'I Been Looking', is also a plaintive plea for a missing loved one, the steady rolling shuffle aligns well with the slightly wailing vocal and 'She's Gone', is another tale of

a lost lady love. The gently rocking guitar on the boogie 'Garry's Night Out' possesses a distinctly warm and uplifting picked feel.

Highly recommended!

**Brian Harman.**



**D.K. Harrell—Talkin' Heavy—Alligator Records ASIN: B0F42W4V19**

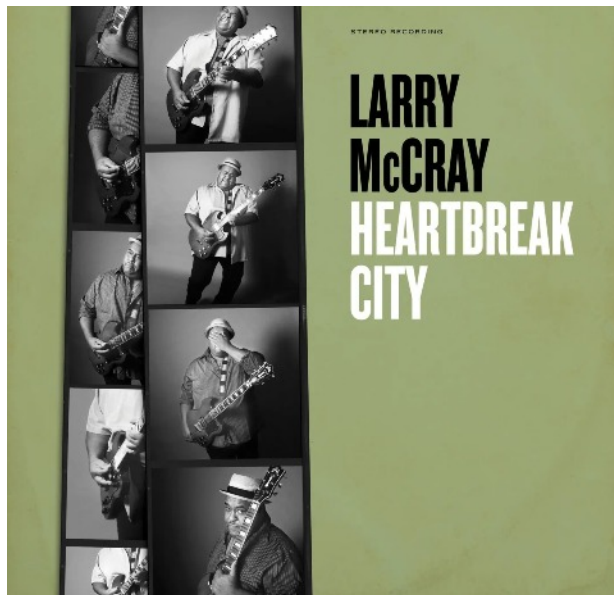
Following his debut album release on the Little Village label this new record has been snapped up by Alligator Records but like his debut it was produced by Kid Andersen at his Greaseland studio. Also, as in his debut, this new release is solid blues, based on the sound of the 3 Kings – Albert, BB and Freddie – with DK's soulful vocals and slashing, single string lead guitar, with a brass-led full band, plus he even dresses formally wearing a suit and collar and tie like his heroes.

Opener 'A Little Taste' is quite funky and the title track slips very much into Albert King territory with 'Talkin' Heavy' referring to the current situation in the news "the world is heavy with the blues". The band features Mr. Andersen (rhythm guitar), Jim Pugh (keyboards), Andrew Moss (bass), June Core and Derrick Martin (drums), plus two percussionists, seven horn players and backing singers - with Kid making everything sound great and DK's lead guitar really cutting through the mix.

'Life's Lesson' is very BB King, with DK's voice more relaxed as he sings over organ and restrained brass and with some nice tenor sax soloing alongside him. I really enjoyed 'Good Man' which starts off slow with DK's voice sounding vulnerable as he sings over just piano backing but the band storms in and we get a pounding gospel-based track. 'Vibe with Me' is a slow blues, 'Into the Room' is jazzy a bit like Boz Scaggs and I really liked the lyrics to 'Liquor Stores and Legs' – "the only things open up late is liquor stores and legs..." The album closes with the nice BB-style blues 'What Real Men Do' and also the wonderful gospel rocker 'Praise These Blues' – like something from Sister Rosetta Tharpe. There's nothing new here but the beauty of the album is that DK really inhabits the blues of the 3 Kings with his strong, resonant voice, his guitar playing and also his song writing – these are all original songs – and this is all enhanced by Kid Andersen's production which lets DK shine and even such a large band never overwhelms him.

**Graham Harrison**





**Larry McCray—Heartbreak City—KTBA Records ASIN: B0F54F239N**

Following a cancer diagnosis in 2013 Larry stepped back from recording and live performance but in 2022 Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith got him back in a studio to record the album 'Blues Without You' which resurrected his career. This new album is again produced by Joe and Josh and features 3 new songs by Larry and three others by Josh, starting with Larry's song 'Try to be a Good Man' with his strong, soulful voice and keening lead guitar – both with echoes of Albert

King. The seven-minute plus title track is a swampy blues with Hammond organ, backing vocals and stabbing brass and 'Bye Bye Blues' is a great typical McCray-style melodic soul blues. Josh and Michael Price's 'Bright Side' was originally written for Bobby Bland but is perfect for Larry and 'Everything Falls on Me' is one of my favourites, a different- sounding track that slowly builds.

Josh's slow blues 'I Know What I've Done' has Joe adding his lead guitar, while on the up tempo 'Keep on Loving My Baby' Kirk Fletcher adds his guitar to Larry and Josh's and 'Hangman' is a semi-acoustic gospel song. 'Stop Your Crying' is a jazzy soul blues with Larry testifying over the top and we check out with 'Crazy World' a rocky song about climate change with some blistering lead guitar and more stabbing brass. This is a great sounding album with Joe and Josh's production really hitting the spot and the core band of Reese Wynans (keyboards), Calvin Turner (bass), and Lemar Carter (drums), plus Jade Macrae and Dannielle De Andrea (backing vocals) providing perfect support to Larry (not forgetting the brass section). I'd love to see Larry touring Britain again soon, he really is an entertaining act to see live.

**Graham Harrison**



**Willie Buck/Bob Corritore—Oh Yeah—Vizztone ASIN: B0F4WXHP4Y**

Willie Buck (88) was born in Mississippi but moved to Chicago as a teenager in the 1950s where he heard the Muddy Waters Band and was so impressed that he has played in that style ever since. Willie and Bob met up in Chicago in the 1970s and now Willie is backed here by Bob and his Rhythm Room All-Stars for an album recorded at Tempest Recording in Tempe, Arizona and produced by Bob, Clarke Rigsby, Kid Andersen and John Wroble. The record kicks off with the title track a Bo Diddley song but in the style of the Waters band with Bob's wailing

the title track a Bo Diddley song but in the style of the Waters band with Bob's wailing

harp out front and 'She's Alright' is a Muddy tune with ex-Waters sideman Bob Margolin on guitar but 'That Ain't Enough' is one of seven originals, again in the Chicago blues style of Muddy, with that characteristic slide guitar.

However, with 'Went Home This Morning' we get some up-tempo Jimmy Reed-style blues with Bob's high register harp and 'She Turned Me Down' is a slow blues with Willie's authentic vocals over a fine performance by the band, especially Anthony Geraci on rolling piano. Muddy's band regularly played Big Joe Williams' 'Baby Please Don't Go' and this version is similar to their swinging version and that same drive continues on 'Me and My Baby'. Finally, we get another distinctive slow blues 'Let Me Find Out Your Name' with Bob on chromatic harmonica and Ben Levin on dramatic piano. I'm with Willie in my admiration for the Muddy Waters Band and the combination of Willie's authentic voice, Bob's always wonderful harp and the excellent band, which combines veterans like Bob Stroger (bass) and Bob Margolin with younger players like Ben Levin, makes for a very enjoyable album.

**Graham Harrison**

## HEAR MY HEART STEVE MARRINER



### **Steve Marriner—Hear My Heart—Cordova Bay Records**

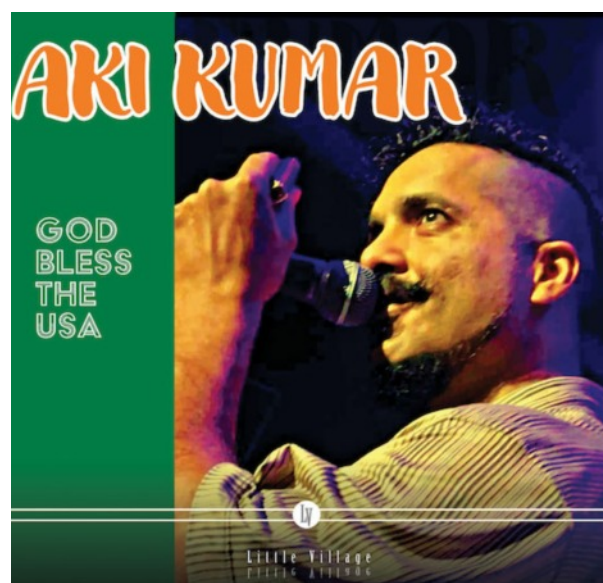
Listening to Canadian bluesman Steve Marriner's new album I couldn't remember where I'd heard the track 'I Can't Dance' before – then it hit me it was a hit for British band Genesis but here it's re-imagined as a swampy blues with Steve's throaty vocals, harp and slide guitar. 'Workin' on Something' and 'Got to Be an Answer' start the album with Steve's soulful vocals and chiming guitars, with 'Answer' adding brass and backing vocals. There are more swampy sounds on 'Hellbound for Heaven' with its atmospheric electric slide guitar and echoey chromatic harmonica.

With 'Straight Line' we get a driving Cajun two-step with Steve's harp taking on the role of an accordion and also some lovely honky-tonk piano, while 'No More Nashville' as you'd probably expect is a country song, a poignant heart-broken ballad with Steve's harmonica joining pedal steel guitar – this is great song writing, evoking the classic country songs of George Jones and more recently John Hiatt. 'Through the Night' is a tough song that increases tempo half way through and reminded me of The Fabulous Thunderbirds with Steve's distorted blues harp, 'Little Bird' is another country song and we finish with 'Shootin' Off' a swinging jump blues instrumental featuring Steve's agile blues harp. This is a really good record that keeps Steve's blues roots but adds other genres and allows him to demonstrate his



vocal, harmonica, guitar and also song-writing skills – which anyone familiar with his work with the band MonkeyJunk will already know about.

## Graham Harrison



### Aki Kumar—God Bless The USA—Little Village

Although he was born in Mumbai, Aki moved to the States in 1998 to study computer science and subsequently work for Adobe, he only turned to music full time in 2013 when laid off by Adobe. This is the singer/harp player's fourth album on Little Village, and his tenth overall, recorded at his own Alt-Brown studio in San Jose. We begin with the Clash's 'Should I Stay or Should I Go' which in Aki's hands becomes a classic blues shuffle, 'A Plea to Be Free' and 'Jarvos Blues' are both nice self-penned Chicago blues and Aki also does a very original take on Willie Dixon's 'I Just Want to Make Love to You'. The instrumental 'Desi Strut' is Aki's Bollywood blues take on the Meters' 'Cissy Strut', while 'Time Will Tell' is a 50s-style doo-wop ballad and the title track is a very poppy song (with hopefully tongue-in-cheek lyrics).

'It Is What It Is' is a slow West-side blues with echoey lead guitar and the Stanley Brothers' 'Man of Constant Sorrow' also gets a makeover - "I said goodbye to old Bombay, the place where I was born and raised". On 'Hard to Get' Aki gets funky with riffing brass and 'Save a Bread' (first recorded in 1967, by Justin Hinds and The Dominoes) is old skool ska meets Bollywood and we check out with 'Harp Tulah' an original-sounding harmonica instrumental. Aki is backed by some great Bay Area session players including Bob Welsh (guitar and piano), Rome Yamilov, Pete Fazzini (guitars), Randy Bernudes (bass) and June Core (drums), as well as Jim Santi Owen (tabla and khanjira) and Will Marsh (sitar) to add that flavour of the subcontinent. This is a very original album where Aki demonstrates that he can sing and play authentic blues harmonica as well as adding other influences to bring much-needed other sounds and colours to the genre.

## Graham Harrison



### Mitch Laddie—Faith and Other Bad Habits—Test Dream Productions

County Durham's Mitch Laddie's new album apparently "explores themes of belief, struggle and redemption" but from the opening track '50 Shades of Blue' Mitch puts a modern, soulful spin on the blues. 'She Keeps Me Down' is a much more traditional-sounding blues with Will Wilde's harmonica joining Mitch's electric slide guitar – great track!

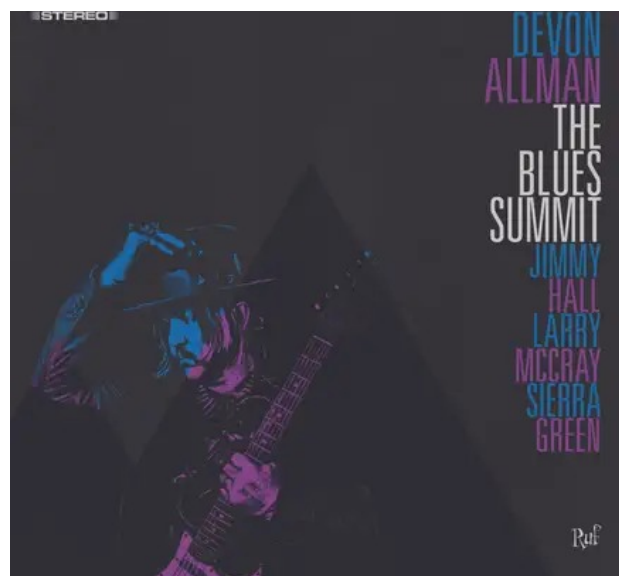


'Angels and Demons' is a soulful ballad and 'The Way It Goes with Love' is a moody slow blues reminiscent of Gary Moore. 'A Day in the Life of a Broken Man' is a lovely semi-acoustic melodic song that reminded me of another northeast singer/guitarist – Mark Knopfler.

Mitch is joined here by long-time bandmates Rhian Wilkinson (bass) and Matt Connor (drums) and although 'Sugar Man' is essentially another slow blues it is also so much more, with influences from jazz and modern R&B and the instrumental 'Hinode' carries on those influences in a very impressive track that really highlights Mitch's guitar playing.

'Faith' is another nod to modern R&B, a laid-back song with nice breathy brass and Mitch's soulful vocals and the closing 'Worth the Fall' is an acoustic song with just Mitch's voice and acoustic guitar. This album isn't quite as bluesy as some of Mitch's other records but it does show his and the band's versatility and will probably appeal to a wider audience.

## **Graham Harrison**



### **Devon Allman - The Blues Summit - Ruf 1328**

Devon Allman is of course the son of Gregg Allman, one of southern rock's greatest icons; he has made some very bluesy music in the past and this album is more or less a straight blues set. Listen to the opening, moody groove of 'Runners In The Night' with Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram supplying fine lead guitar lines, or the wailing blues-rock of 'Blues Is A Feeling' with the veteran Jimmy Hall on vocals and harp – the latter also contributes a more than worthy 'Wang Dang

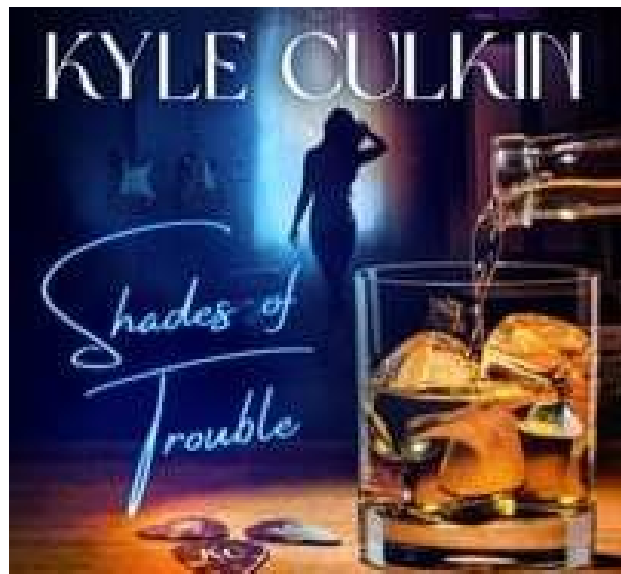
Doodle'.

As the astute may have realised, on this set Devon has enlisted some illustrious guests, and features them quite heavily. Robert Randolph's sacred steel guitar playing is strongly in evidence on the timely hand-clapper 'Peace To The World', and Larry McCray takes both lead vocal and guitar on the Stax-tinged number, 'Hands And Knees'. Larry also supplied the funky 'Get Greasy With It', whilst in a strong contrast, New Orleans singer Sierra Green provides the lovely vocal on the smooth soul ballad, 'Real Love'.

Devon himself shines on the fine rocker (with some soul tinges) 'After You', a fine rocker, a strong and worthwhile cover of Jimi Hendrix's 'Little Wing', and the closing, somewhat er, eerie instrumental, 'Midnight Lake Erie'. There is a real lack of ego to

this set – all concerned seem to be intent on just having a ball, and the result is a very tasty release.

## **Norman Darwen**



## **Kyle Culkin – Shades of Trouble – Tonebucker Records**

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

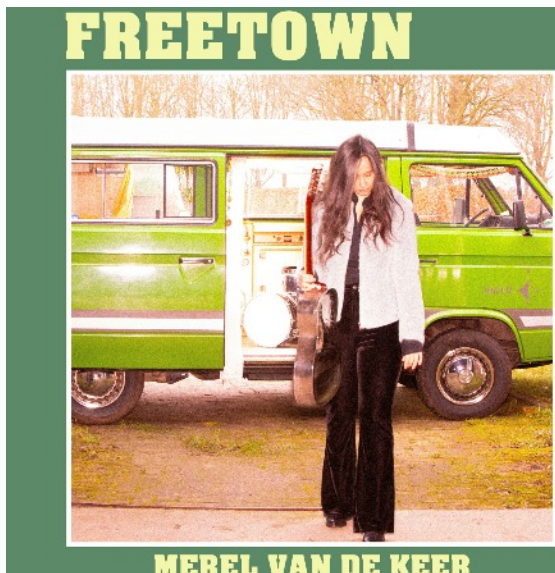
Tough lyrics delivered with bags of attitude, grinding Rolling Stones-ish guitar, and soulful backing vocals, the whole of the title track topped off with a sassy sax solo. This is blues-rock...

Singer and guitarist Kyle Culkin opened for BB King's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday tour and has been in demand for the last couple of decades; he has frequently worked as guitarist for the Jeff Jensen Band. He's a versatile player as he demonstrates here; try 'Stockton Romance', which rides a blues rhythm but has a country feel to it – Americana, I guess – and Karl Hunter's sax playing again adds a notable touch.

'She's Evil' is a funky blues (with nice sax and backing vocals again, the latter by Jade MacRae and Bek Jensen). Many of the other tracks here hover around the indistinct border between blues and Americana – lend an ear to the instrumental 'Alora Rose' – and then 'Love You My Way' is out-and-out Americana, whilst Robbie Robertson's throbbing 'Ophelia' is a rootsy rock performance.

It is a very listenable album all round, provided you are partial to some rock with your blues and Americana. It finishes on a real high with a fine gospel- and soul-inflected cover of John Hiatt's 'Have A Little Faith In Me'.

## **Norman Darwen**



## **Merel Van De Keer – Freetown – Independent (Single)**

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

One woman band Merel recorded this more than five minutes long digital single release live in the studio as she sings and plays resonator guitar, bass drum and snare drum on her first release since her EP 'Ghost In The Storm' released in September 2022. It's a raw-sounding invitation to "get your ass on the Greyhound", with touches of Skip James in the overall feel - well until the mood gets tougher as the song picks up, hitting a strong

groove and with tough slide work. It is certainly worth investigating, and I wonder what else Merel has in store.

## Norman Darwen



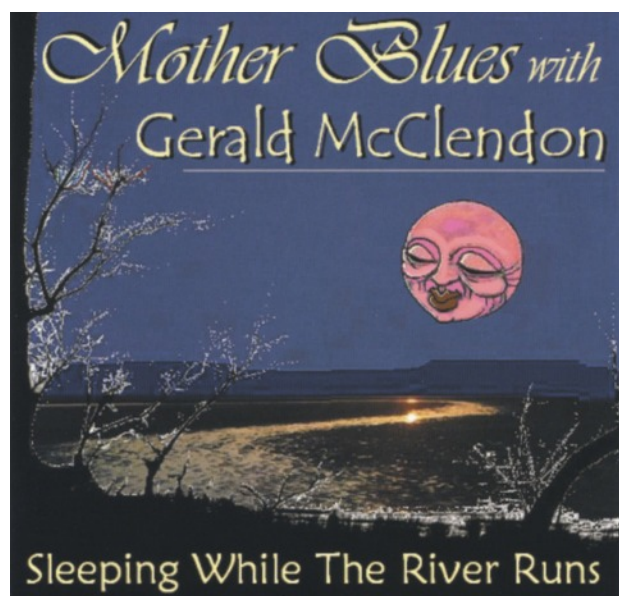
### **Misty Blues—Other Side of Blue—Guitar One** ([www.mistybluesband.com](http://www.mistybluesband.com))

Hot on the heels of their short British tour in June and July, along comes the seventeenth album from this acclaimed five-piece Western Massachusetts band led by vocalist Gina Coleman. Misty Blues often shows influences from other music genres, but although some tracks on this release stick fairly close to the blues pure and simple, there are healthy doses of related styles too.

It opens, a little surprisingly maybe, with the fine slow blues of 'I Got Vices' (also released as a digital single), with Gina's tough vocal out front, whilst 'Maybe I Could' is a funky stomper with shades of Nina Simone in Gina's singing, and the funky blues approach – but even funkier – continues with 'Trust Ain't Given'. 'Three Mississippi's' is a smoochy, end of the night number, 'Yes, I Will' sounds like a sixties blues adaptation of an old folk number – rather nice and the kind of thing Misty Blues does particularly well – I will also note here the excellent sax playing of Aaron Dean and the guitar break of Seth Fleischmann, over the cracking rhythm section of Diego Mongue on bass and Rob Tatten drums.

'Carry On This Way' nods to blues-rock and maybe even psychedelic blues, 'Saving Grace' is a cool-sounding call-and-response number that I imagine would really whip up an audience in a live setting, and harp player Bob Stannard adds down-home grit to the muscular blues-funk of the closer, 'I Ain't Buying'. Chalk this release up as another winner for Misty Blues.

## Norman Darwen



### **Mother Blues with Gerald McClendon— Sleeping While the River Runs—Sleeping Dog SDRCD 10003**

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

Recorded at Soto Sound Studios in Chicago, which some may remember from their frequent work with JSP Records back in the day (amongst many other things), this album presents soul and blues singer Gerald "Soul Keeper" McClendon - one of the best around these days - fronting a band of Chicago blues veterans led by the excellent guitarist and the major song-writer here, Steve

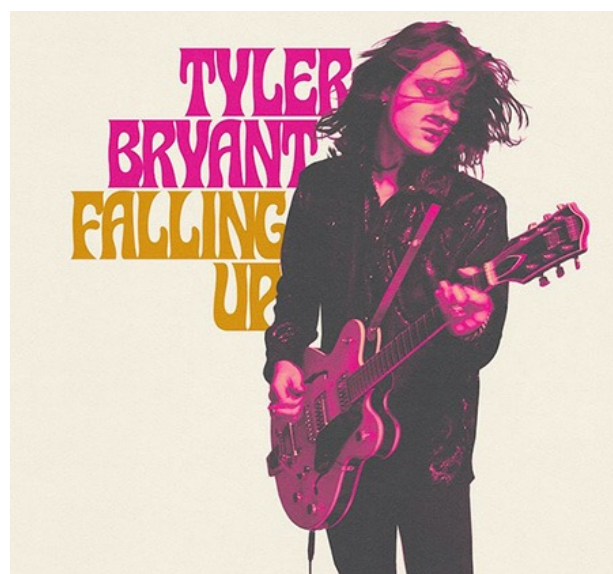


Bramer. It was originally released in 2005, so this is its twentieth anniversary, and it's good to have it available again.

Right from the off, it is obvious that this was a wonderful pairing. Gerald sings a soulful opener in 'Pass You By', before he moves on into several styles of blues – try maybe the fine blues club sound of 'Leaves Tremble On The Tree'. There are soul ballads such as 'Going Down For The Last Time', the Ike & Tina inflection of the title track (the backing vocalists really excel here, and do listen to the second version) and the gospel style of 'Glory Train', a lovely, straight blues shuffle in 'Come To Me', a slow blues with 'Chalk Line', and a couple of instrumentals, with every one of the seventeen tracks here well worth your time.

Gerald has built up a very respectable discography over the years. This was one of his early albums; there is a very detailed booklet outlining the backgrounds to songs. It's great to have, but make no mistake, this is music that most definitely stands (tall) on its own merits.

## Norman Darwen

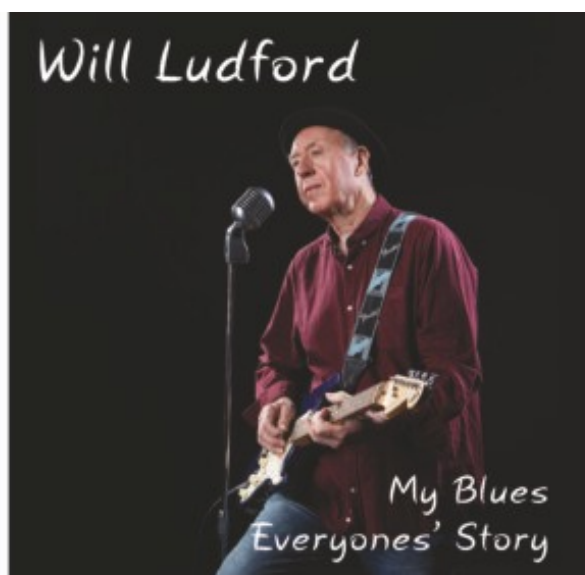


### **Tyler Bryant – Falling up – Crosstie (Single)** ([www.tylerbryantmusic.com](http://www.tylerbryantmusic.com))

Tyler Bryant, front man of Nashville-based roots-rock band Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown, steps out solo on this digital release – well, with a few friends of course. They were having fun in the studio when they came up with this track, a kind of answer song/ follow-up to Freddie King's well-known 'Going Down', with a similar heavy rhythm, a raw, tough vocal, and plenty of piercing guitar work. "A reckless moment captured on tape" is how Tyler describes it, and he's right. Try and catch it if you can. If you know the original,

then it will certainly bring a smile to your face. If you don't, you might want to check it after hearing this. Good fun, and available on all streaming services.

## Norman Darwen



### **Will Ludford—My Blues Everyone's Story—Independent**

In his career Will has worked with people such as Tiny Tim, Alton Ellis, George Harrison, The Detroit Emeralds, members of chart-topping band Liquid Gold, Buzz, Taylor Studios, Laurel Canyon, Sneaky Pete Kleinow, and more.

In 2014, Will was voted guitarist of the year by XLR Radio Europe, with Jimi Hendrix, of whom Will is a huge fan, coming second!

This is his second recent album and it is agreeable and likeable in a MOR sort of way.

The songs themselves are excellently constructed, often with clever twists and turns in the lyrics. There is no doubt too, that Will is an accomplished guitar player. The recording quality is high and the arrangements are thoughtful and well considered.

There are two small problems, one fairly easily rectified the second more problematic. First, I kept on wishing that the guitar breaks were more forceful and in-your-face. The guitar solos are set too far back in the mix for me, and as Will's style is often compared to Garry Moore (quite legitimately IMHO) it needs the guitar solos to be boosted to bring them well to the front, over the rhythm section, just like Mr Moore did.

The second problem for me (and it may be me alone) is the vocals. Will has a nice melodic voice and sings well and in tune, but oh! that English accent. Maybe it could work like a 'hook' or something and it's possible it's not been noticed by others but for me it's rather incongruous..

Nevertheless, the album is, in summary, well produced and skilfully delivered. Will has dedicated his musical life to the Blues and deserves to be recognised for that!

**Ian K McKenzie**



### **Various Artists—Jus' Blues 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Legends Collection—Jus' Blues Music Foundation**

The Jus' Blues Music Foundation, based in Georgia, USA, held its 25th Annual Jus' Blues Music Awards & Conference with a Star-Studded Week of Legacy, Innovation and Soul at the end of July 2025. This album is a celebration of that event and of their quarter century of supporting the blues.

It consists of a selection of eleven previously issued (but re-mastered) tracks, coupled with a small selection of new cuts and the publication of some unreleased tracks. The whole album might be seen as a summary of contemporary blues music, suitable perhaps as an introduction to the genre for someone wanting to 'know' about contemporary blues, gospel and soul music.

There are previously unreleased tracks, one from Trudy Lynn 'Turning the Same Ole Corners' and one from the late Lucky Peterson 'See My Way God' and two brand new tracks from Bobby Rush 'Garbage Man' and Latimore, 'Let's Straighten It Out'.

One fascinating inclusion is Zadakia Hooker, the late John Lee's daughter who

delivers a delightful version of her song 'Bluesman's Journey' telling of the life and times of her father.

This one really is a very useful reminder of where contemporary blues are, and that the music is VERY far from being dead!

**Ian K McKenzie**



## **Rory Block—Heavy On the Blues—Rough Trade, MC Music, MHCD124**

Rory Block's "Heavy On the Blues" is a powerful, deeply personal statement from one of acoustic blues' most revered voices. Known for her tributes to blues pioneers, Block shifts gears here, embracing electric blues legends while still anchoring the album in her signature slide and acoustic guitar work.

Tommy Tucker's rock 'n' roll classic 'High Heel Sneakers' kicks things off with playful swagger, showcasing Block's humour and rhythmic finesse.

'Walking the Back Streets' (Koko Taylor via Little Milton) is a standout, with Ronnie Earl's fiery guitar complementing Block's emotional depth.

Buddy Guy's 'What Kind of Woman Is This' gets a lyrical twist and a chugging groove courtesy of Jimmy Vivino.

'The Wind Cries Mary' is perhaps the album's most surprising moment—Block channels Hendrix's melancholy with searing emotion, backed by Joanna Connor's sizzling lead guitar.

Block's interpretation of Hendrix is especially poignant, as she reflects on her late son Thiele, a musical prodigy who passed away young. This emotional thread runs through the album, adding gravity to her performances.

She also includes the gospel tune 'Hold To His Hand', layering harmony vocals with reverent grace—a nod to her role as an ordained minister and host of Church LIVE in Chatham, NY.

Co-produced with her husband Rob Davis, the album features nine covers and one original. Block plays nearly all instruments herself, except for the guest guitar solos. Her arrangements are raw yet refined, honouring the spirit of blues while pushing its boundaries.

If you're drawn to blues with soul, grit, and a touch of spiritual reflection, "Heavy On the Blues" is a must-listen.

**Bogus Artie Fisial**





Terry Reid: To Be Treated Rite



Erin Harpe & Friends: Pick Poor Robin Clean



Mud Morganfield: Same Thing

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**— Big Bill Broonzy**

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