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Blues Bits

SEPTEMBER 2020

BLUES IN THE SOUTH



INTERVIEW WITH
MALAYA BLUE

INTERVIEW WITH
GEORGIA
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LAWRENCE
LEBO'S COLUMN

REVIEWS

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FOR THE SIXTH TIME IN THE 33 YEAR LONG PUBLICATION HISTORY OF BiTS, WE HAVE NO GIGS TO PUBLISH. ALL HAVE BEEN CANCELLED OR OCCASIONALLY POSTPONED. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHEN THINGS WILL RETURN TO NORMAL, BUT BiTS WILL CAREFULLY MONITOR THE SITUATION AND WHEN THINGS START TO RETURN TO NORMAL WE SHALL LET YOU KNOW.

IN THE MEAN TIME, DON'T GO TO GIGS, MAINTAIN YOUR SOCIAL DISTANCE AND REMEMBER:

THE CORONA VIRUS DOES NOT
CIRCULATE

IT IS PEOPLE THAT CIRCULATE IT

Henry Pugh: April 17, 1938 - August 8, 2020

Well-known Montgomery, Alabama musician and educator Henry Pugh has passed away, former Mayor Todd Strange confirmed.

Pugh, who had recently been sick and was hospitalized, passed away Saturday at the age of 83.

The jazz and blues keyboard musician was known for his weekend shows in his downtown spot Sous La Terre (Underground), at La Salle Bleu (The Blue Room) and more recently shows on the stage of Commerce Beerworks.

Pugh was born on April 17, 1938 in his mother's home at 324 Chandler Street. In 1954, Pugh joined the United States Air Force where he served four years of active duty and four years in the Reserves.

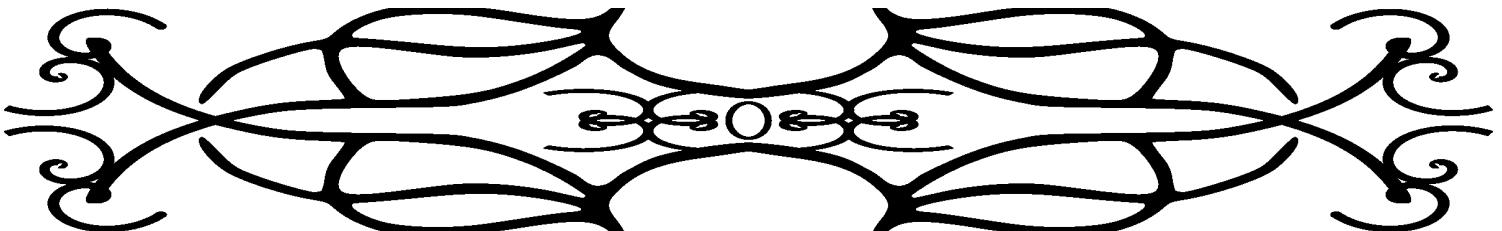
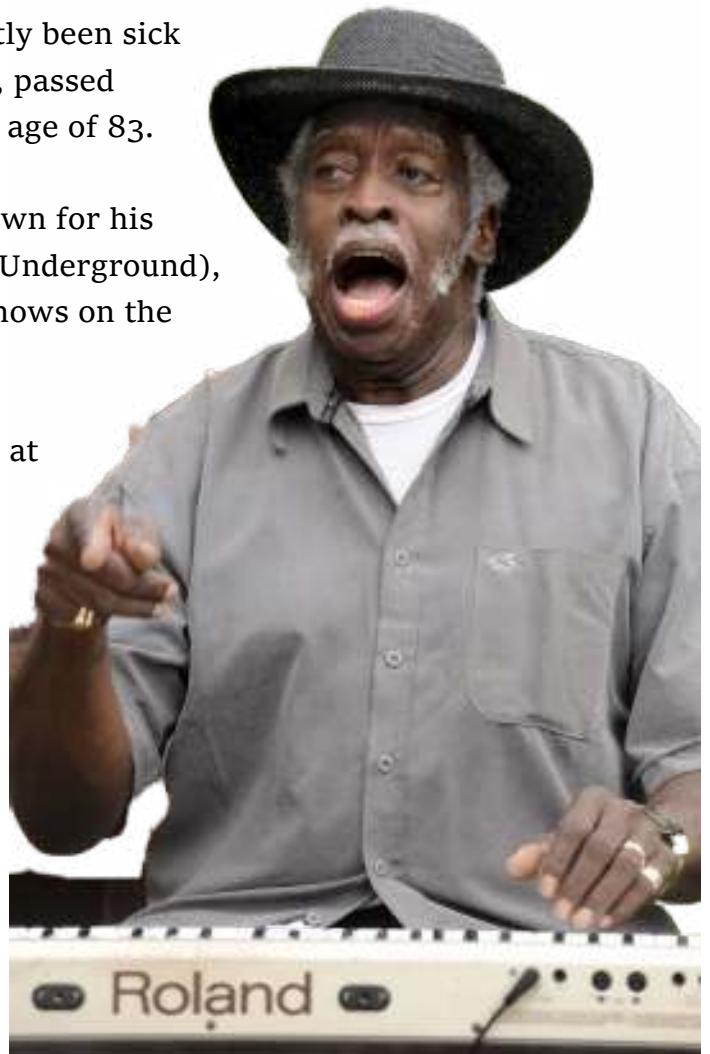
Pugh studied music at Alabama State University, graduating with his masters in 1962. He later taught music at various schools, including in Central Lowndes County for 23 years.

In 1978, Pugh bought the Key Hole Club, renaming it "Sous La Terre" because of its French underground feel. He played every weekend at the club and hosted several private events, fundraisers and special activities throughout the state.

Tee Washington, Pugh's son who lives in Mobile, said Pugh died at about 11:35 a.m. at Baptist Medical Center South.

On July 23, he had to cut short a performance at downtown Montgomery's Commerce BeerWorks and was later hospitalized. He was diagnosed with having COVID-19, and later suffered a heart attack and kidney failure.

"Even with the condition that he was in, we still thought that he was going to pull through," Washington said.



Bryan Lee (The Braille Blues Daddy)

March 16, 1943 – August 21, 2020



Bryan Lee was an American blues guitarist and singer based in New Orleans, Louisiana. During the '80s and '90s, the only blues band that visitors to Bourbon Street in New Orleans would hear was

Bryan Lee's Jump Street Five Band at the Old Absinthe House. Bryan completely lost his eyesight by the age of eight. His avid interest in early rock and blues was fostered through the 1950s by late night listening sessions via the Nashville-based radio station WLAC-AM, where he first encountered the sounds of Elmore James, Albert King and Albert Collins.

By his late teens, Lee was playing rhythm guitar in a regional band called The Glaciers that covered Elvis Presley, Little Richard and Chuck Berry material. Through the 1960s, Lee's interest turned to Chicago blues and he soon found himself immersed in that scene, opening for some of his boyhood heroes. In 1979 he released his first album named *Beauty Isn't Always Visual*.



In January 1982, Lee moved to New Orleans, eventually landing a steady gig at the Old Absinthe House on Bourbon Street, becoming a favourite of tourists in the city's French Quarter. For the next 14 years, Lee and his Jump Street Five played five nights a week at that popular bar, developing a huge following and a solid reputation.

To the end of his life, Lee continued to perform in New Orleans. He also toured several times a year in the Midwest, Eastern Seaboard, Rocky Mountain States and recently Europe and Brazil.

Lee appeared with Kenny Wayne Shepherd as the musical guest on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* on February 14, 2007.

He told OffBeat in 1994, "I think it's important to show people that you can have a handicap, or a disability, whatever people want to call blindness — and believe me, in some respects it is a handicap, because you can't read your money, you can't drive a car—I feel it is important for me, even in that little club, to let people see that I can get around by myself. Like in church, they don't have to bring communion to me — I can walk up and take communion. These are small things, but I think it's important that they see that blind people can live productive lives and do a lot for themselves. There are those who can't, but there are sighted people who can't do things for themselves, because they don't have the want or they just don't have the ability."





Most Played Album Top 40 – July 2020

Collated from the playlists of the Independent Blues Broadcasters Association Members

Position	Artist	Album
1	Emma Wilson	Feelgood EP
2	Errol Linton	No Entry
3	Savoy Brown	Ain't Done Yet
4	Andy Lindquist	Blues By Twos
5	Kaz Hawkins	Memories Of
6	Wily Bo Walker & Danny Flam	Ain't No Man A Good Man
7	Peter Karp	Magnificent Heart
8	Dion	Blues With Friends
9	Dave Thomas	One More Mile
10	Paul Allan	Blue Notes, Blue Nights
11	Robbie Reay	Up And Down
12	Anthony Geraci	Daydreams In Blue
13	Hurricane Ruth	Good Life
14	Robert Jon & The Wreck	Last Light On The Highway
15	Crooked Eye Tommy	Hot Coffee And Pain
16	Paul Gillings	Invisible Prison
17	Grant Dermody	My Dony
18	C.D. Woodbury	World's Gone Crazy
19	Eel Pie	Eel Pie
20	Gregg Martinez	MacDaddy Mojeaux
21	Larkin Poe	Self Made Man
22	Mike Zito	Quarantine Blues
23	JW-Jones	Sonic Departures
24	Gavin Povey	When I Hear Rhythm \$ Blues
25	Marcus Lazarus	How Low Can You Go
26	Mandalyn	Wrecked
27	The Lucky Losers	Godless Land
28	Victor Wainwright & The Train	Memphis Loud
29	Bob Angell	Supernal Blues
30	J.D. Taylor	The Coldwater Sessions
31	The Terraplane Blues Band	Midnight Train EP
32	John P Taylor Band	River Flow
33	Buddy Reed & The Rip It Ups	Blues Sez It All
34	Red's Blues	Broke Down In The Fast Lane
35	Ma Polaine's Great Decline	City Of Love
36	Jose Ramirez	Here I Come
37	John Primer & Bob Corritore	The Gypsy Woman Told Me
38	Too Slim And The Taildraggers	The Remedy
39	Jim Kirkpatrick	Ballad Of A Prodigal Son
40	Bridget Kelly Band	Dark Spaces

THE BiTS INTERVIEW: MALAYA BLUE

BiTS: Malaya, I want to talk to you about your music, of course, and the new album and new single and all the rest of it, but can I start off by asking you what your background is? I gather you come from Norwich.

MB: That's right, yes. I live in Norwich in Norfolk. We've been here I think about 12 years. I've been up and down the country really. I was born in Kent. My background, I've got mixed parents. My mother came over from Mauritius and met my father, who was a lecturer at her training hospital and that's how they met, and I came along [chuckles].

BiTS: Was there a lot of music in your house when you were a kid?

MB: There was, yes. My father used to sing in the house. He had this wonderful thick Glaswegian voice and he would sing old Scottish songs as he went around the house in the morning opening all the curtains and getting us up for the day and that really resonated with me, these lovely dulcet tones. Of course, when I was a child, there was no Internet or iPads and stuff. We used to listen to vinyl records with a needle, so when he used to go out for his evening walks, I used to listen to his record collection, and he had a real love of female vocalists. The big female vocalists of the day, Barbra Streisand, Shirley Bassey, those big kind of torch singers, so I kind of grew up listening to that kind of music and yes, I absolutely loved it.

BiTS: When did you decide you wanted to be a performer then?

MB: Well, I think honestly, Ian, I've never actually made that decision. I think that decision has kind of been made for me over the years. I've been coerced in the nicest possible way. But it's very nerve-wracking the first few times, and actually, it's very nerve-wracking every time, but that's only because you want to bring your best and you know that people have travelled and paid and bought tickets and made arrangements and you want them to feel the value of that and feel the best of you and the best experience of you that they can have. I've always been very nervous about the idea of performing, but now that I do it, I mean now that I can't do it, interestingly, I really want to, so this is a good lesson for all nervous performers out there. Now that we're in lockdown we can't perform, and it's made me realise that actually performing is something that I do really enjoy doing and I

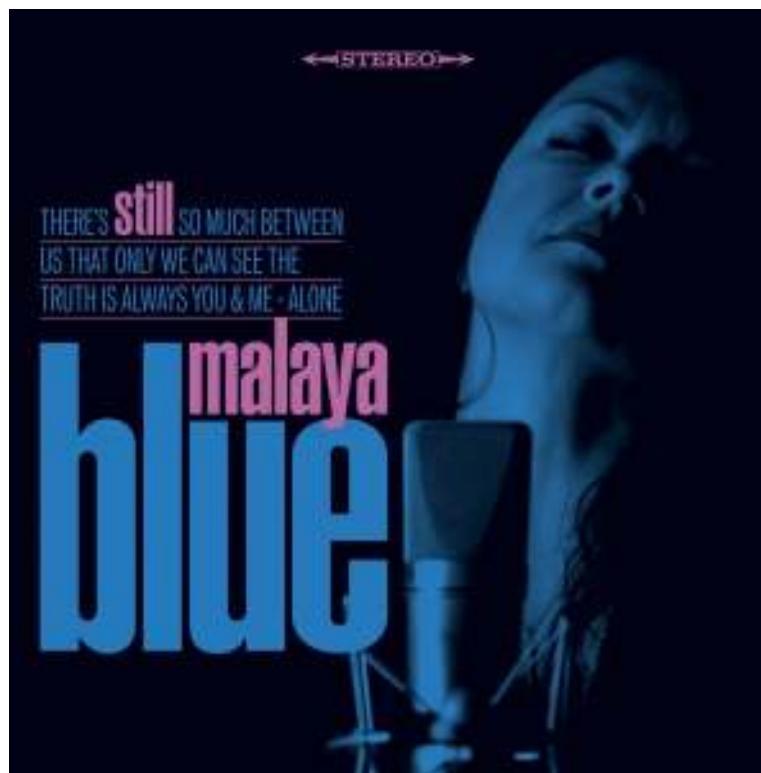


look forward to getting back to it. It's been started by somebody else, the whole me performing thing.

BiTS: Do you play an instrument? Do you play the piano or anything?

MB: I don't really play any instrument, no not really. I think I've been a bit spoilt in that I've worked with a lot of composers over the years and people that are able to put compositions together and also my first degree was in music technology, so I'm able to use digital software to put ideas together. My husband does a lot of the compositions and I do collaborations with other musicians as well. I've been very lucky but also very lazy. My instrument is my voice. That's my excuse.

BiTS: Well you've written a lot of music for this new album, some of it with Dennis Walker. Tell me about working together with somebody else.



MB: Collaboration is always healthy. I think, as a song writer, you can get a little bit siloed into the way you do things. When you've got somebody like Dennis Walker who has got such experience and expertise and such a sophisticated mechanism for working in the way that he does, there's so much to learn, and so it was a collaboration. There were effectively three collaborations, or four really. Dennis Walker was one, Brett Lucas was another, and Richard Cousins, who I worked with on the title track, 'Still'. All of the collaborations came together in different ways, but they are all healthy experiences in which I've learnt a lot. I learnt so much from Dennis and I'm really hoping that that will show in this third album.

BiTS: I'm sure you didn't all do it sitting in the same room together. Was it all done by email and transferring files? All that kind of thing.

MB: Yes, it was. It was done making edits, sending things backwards and forwards. Having Skype conversations, making more edits, sending things backwards and forwards. It was kind of prohibitively expensive to get Dennis over to the UK to work in the studio with me, but fortunately, he was very very welcome to the idea of working online and so that's how we did it. He would come back with revisions or email when he had some ideas and suggestions and I would consider those and implement them and then send things back to him. That process would continue until he said, "Malaya, you're ready to take it in the studio".

BiTS: At that point, can I ask you something personal which is, is Malaya Blue your real name or a chosen name?

MB: It's a chosen name, yes.

BiTS: Am I allowed to know your real name.

MB: You can. Are you going to print it though? No.

BiTS: No I won't.



MB: My name is *****. I found very early on from previously using social media to promote myself as a singer when I did guest vocals for different genres like dance and pop, people get very interested in you and then if you use your real name they kind of find you and then they start messaging your children. I learnt early on to have a pseudonym and just do that because it gives you a little bit of protection and privacy.

BiTS: That's very sensible, I think, in today's atmosphere. It's not very pleasant for some people and I wouldn't want you to be one of those.

MB: No, absolutely. Thank you. Just as Malaya Blue I've had experiences of individuals who get a little bit hung up on you and want to kind of bombard you with intimate images of themselves, etc. You have to be so cautious and I've had people contacting my children. Finding them through my personal page, so that's why we use the pseudonym.

BiTS: I listened earlier on to the new single, which is very good indeed. I love it. The guitar playing is fabulous. Who is it?

MB: That's a chap called Nat Martin.

BiTS: Absolutely terrific stuff.

MB: He's a really lovely tasty guitarist and he was an absolute joy to work with and he brought so much vibe to the album with his rhythm guitar and with his lead guitar. Really really fantastic guitarist and yes, absolutely, there's plenty of Nat on the album. You'll hear him everywhere and he did a fantastic job.

BiTS: No doubt it will appear before very long. Tell me when you went into the studio did you do the album all in one go or was it done over a length of time?

MB: No, we went into the studio for five days and we did all the tracks. Unfortunately, I was very very ill with a bad chest and a bad cold, so I didn't do any vocals, but actually, that gave me time to work with the arrangements as they'd been done live. When we take the tracks into the studio, they're effectively midi tracks and then of course when the boys start vibing together and playing you get a little bit more push and pull in different places, so I had time to sit and work with that vocally before I went in the studio and recorded the vocals. Then we went in and I did all the vocals

I think in two days, it might have been three or two and a half, but I went in and I had all the tracks and we just laid all the vocals and the backing vocals, yes.

BiTS: Your first album was ‘Bourbon Street’. Is this one very different?

MB: Yes, I like to think so. Yes, absolutely. ‘Bourbon Street’ was album number one and since then we’ve had ‘Heartsick’ and with each album, you learn a bit more or your life changes and develops. You grow and your songs I hope, mature. My voice I hope, matures and I’ve taken a lot of feedback from not only ‘Bourbon Street’ but from ‘Heartsick’ as well and just tried to produce something that is just that little bit more sophisticated, more mature, more tuned into who I am because it all goes so fast. ‘Bourbon Street’ is five years old.

BiTS: Is it as long as that?



MB: Yes, it’s been a long time, already and ‘Heartsick’ has got to be three years old now. It was time to crack on with something new.

BiTS: Tell me something about the songs that are on the album. Is there anything that you’ve got as a favourite track on it?

MB: Oh, gosh, that’s a good question. Yes, there are but the title track, ‘Still’, was a really really big favourite for me, very much from the beginning, from the first time that I heard it but I’d have to say actually the one that resonates with me the most is ‘Why is Peace so Hard’ and that is a

fantastic ballad that was composed by my husband, Graham, and written by Dennis and the story behind the lyrics, there is another story which is personal to Dennis Walker and it was really important that I got that song right. The very first time I recorded the vocal in the studio, I just burst into tears. Although we got a great emotional, vulnerable take, it wasn’t going to sit well with the other tracks, so we kind of stole bits from the first take and I did a more powerful second take, but yes, absolutely, the idea of this woman going to the airport to pick up her son and until you get two-thirds of the way into the song, when I sing the word ‘coffin’, that you realise that he’s actually died at war and she’s gone to receive his body. Dennis was a bugle player that used to stand at ceremony when the boys used to come back from war in their coffins, so it was a really really personal and pertinent story there, especially with everything that’s going on across the world with all of the challenges that we face as the human race and our bad behaviour at times, so I felt that that was a really important track. For that reason, I think that’s the one that really hits home with me, definitely.

BiTS: You reminded me of a country music song called ‘He Stopped Loving Her Today’, by George Jones, in which it turns out that the person who stopped loving her has actually died.

MB: Oh, God, yes.

BiTS: You're obviously stuck, as all musicians are at the moment, with not being able to do any gigs?

MB: That's right.

BiTS: Have you had to cancel lots of them?

MB: No, we were actually in a fortunate position in that I'd taken a hiatus from gigging because I'd been working on the new album and so we were just starting to turn our thoughts to planning a gig schedule and getting the tracks out on the road when COVID came about, so it had an interesting effect on us because it's actually given us a little bit more time. Normally when your new album's coming out you've got to be pushing for gigs, pushing for publicity but actually in this instance, we've been able to, I don't know maybe enjoy the release. I know the album's not out just yet, but we're doing a lot of the PR and a lot of the work that goes on in the background, such as this interview, of course and that can happen with a little bit more freedom around it.

BiTS: I'm pretty sure that the pandemic is going to change the world. There are all kinds of things like you are talking about that are happening in other kinds of areas as well. People finding new ways of doing things.

MB: Absolutely and we keep hearing the phrase 'the new normal' and I don't doubt that that is very much what's going to be the case that we will find a different way of doing things which will become our new normal and, you know, it might encourage different behaviours and it might inspire different things, so let's hope that the changes can be positive ones.

BiTS: Well, let's say that I love the single. I think it's absolutely fabulous. I'm not going to take any more of your time, Malaya, thank you very much, indeed for talking to me.

MB: And you. Thank you very much for your time, as well. Take good care of yourself.

BiTS: Bye.

MB: Bye now.



GEORGIA RANDALL – FLYING ON...

INTERVIEW BY NORMAN DARWEN

ND: You were born in Virginia, is that right?

GR: Yes, I was born in South Norfolk, Virginia, which is now Chesapeake after a redistricting many years ago. I am currently living in Florida.



ND: What were your earliest experiences of music?

GR: Gospel music was my earliest influence. My grandmother played the organ in the church, and my uncle was the preacher, so I was immersed in it. They both had powerful singing voices. I am told that I sang my first solo at the tender age of five. I do not recall it, but I do recall singing in the church choir and being a featured singer starting at age nine. I also sang in the school chorus in junior high. My grandfather's brother's son was Gene Vincent and we would walk down the street to listen to them playing music at their house. I really do not remember much as I was just a toddler. Later, after Gene Vincent had gone to Europe to pursue a career there, I would listen to his father playing rockabilly music on his guitar. I liked that style of music. It was different from the pop style of music being played on the radio which I did not like at all. I loved gospel, soul, blues, and rock.

ND; How did you come to the blues?

GR: I think it was the blues that came to me. I have lived it and it comes through me to my music.

ND: Who were your earliest influences, and what did you get from them?

GR: Early on, I listened to Koko Taylor, Big Mama Thornton, Bessie Smith, and Etta James. A bit later, it was Janis Joplin, Tina Turner, Otis Redding and various Motown artists. They all had such soul and passion in their voices. They were authentic, pouring out their soul through song.

ND: How easy was it to be taken seriously as a female artist when you started out?

GR: I have never had an issue with being taken seriously, but I have struggled within an industry dominated by men, with standards that differ for female artists versus their male counterparts. If you are a female artist and are not young, sexy, and beautiful, it is more difficult to market yourself. I see many male artists getting national attention who would not make it with those same looks/image etc if they were female. But I am a positive person and believe that if you follow your passion, do not compromise, and stay true to yourself, you can do anything. Keep going and let your light shine through.

ND: When did you become a professional musician?

GR: When I was 15 years old, I had a boyfriend who played guitar in a local band. A talent/booking agent was coming out to listen to them. My boyfriend invited me to sing a couple of songs with the band for this audition. After the audition, the agent pulled me aside, stated he had no interest in the band, but wanted to use me in an already established band in the area. That started it.

ND: Can you tell me a couple of high points of your musical career?

GR: My first performance with a band at age 15 would be one of those high points. Here I was standing on stage performing in front of a room full of people who loved us. That energy from the crowd really hooked me into moving forward with music as a career. Next would be when I was about 19 years old. I frequently went to a club called Sandy's Jazz and Blues Revival in Beverly, Massachusetts. Some great acts came to play there. I had attended their weekly jam sessions and the owner, Sandford Berman, really liked my voice. When I showed up one night to see Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, I was taken backstage to meet them and got to sit down and sing a song with them. That was a thrill. Fast forward to the present and a major high point is seeing my original music being streamed, purchased, downloaded, and charting.

ND: Do any blues performers stand out for you?

GR: Wow, so many. BB King, John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy, Etta James, Big Mama Thornton, Joe Bonamassa, Koko Taylor, Warren Haynes, Janiva Magness, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, and Ruthie Foster are the ones who stand out to me. Why? Because there is passion in their voices, in their music. There are many blues artists who have the "chops", but not the soul.

ND: You work as a solo artist, or with a band - do you have any particular preference?



GR: I enjoy both. When playing with other musicians on the stage, there is an energy and chemistry that brings the music to a different level. It is fun to play off that energy. For me, there is more pressure and nerves before I step on the stage to perform solo, but I enjoy the raw and undecorated performances.

ND: How would you define your sound for someone who has not heard you?

GR: If you combine soul, blues, rock and roll, and little bit of country into a ball...that is me. I am often asked how such a big voice comes out of such a tiny body. So, I guess you can say I serve up that musical ball with some vocal power. I have been compared, vocally, to Etta James, Bonnie Raitt, Janis Joplin, Melissa Etheridge, and Susan Tedeschi.

ND: Where do you get your inspirations for your songs?

GR: Everywhere. From my personal experience in life, my experiences with people and my views of the world. 'Stray Cat Blues' from my second album was written for a little stray cat who wandered up my driveway and into my life. The meows you hear at the end of the song are her meows. 'Big Oak Tree' on my latest release was inspired by the huge oak tree standing just outside my bedroom window. 'Is it Today' on my latest album was written for my 19-year-old dog who was dying. Yeah, I am a big animal and nature lover.

ND: You have also won awards for your songs...



GR: Yes, I won two awards at the 2019 IndieCon, Indie Originals Live Convention, held here in Melbourne, Florida. My song 'Fever' from my first album (**Fly On**) won for best blues song and my song 'You Lied To Me' from my second album (**These Days**) won for best blues vocal performance. I feel very blessed that my latest album, **Help Wanted**, is charting on the Roots Music Report Top 50 Blues Rock Album chart and a couple of songs off that album are charting on the Blues Rock Song chart.

ND: There are a lot of positive messages in your music...

GR: Yes, there are. That is because I am basically a positive person. I believe if you can dream it and envision it, and you work hard at it, you can do it.

ND: Tell me the background to your new CD?

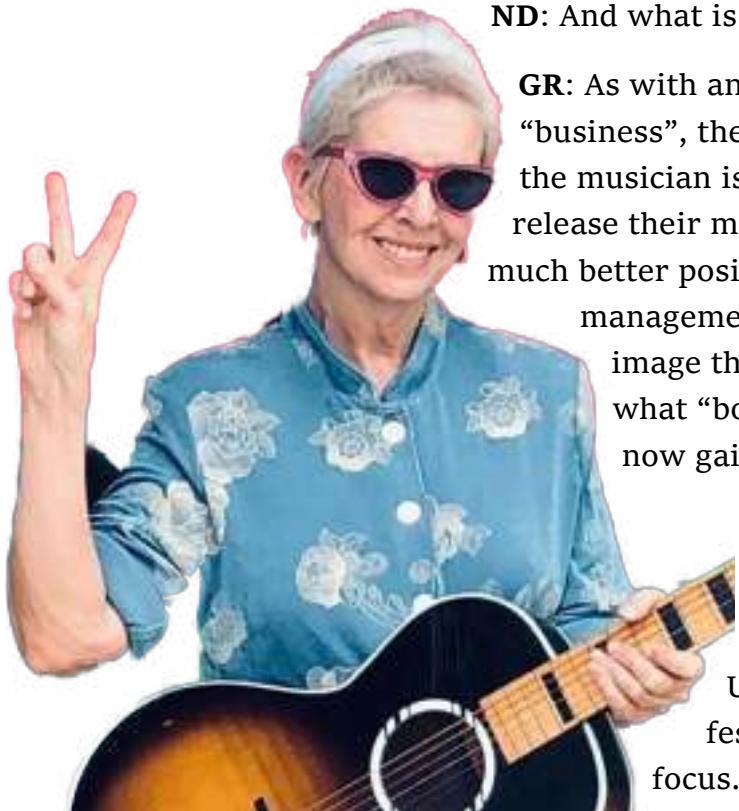
GR: My latest album, **Help Wanted**, was released in January of this year. I had previously released my first album, **Fly On**, in April 2018 and my second album, **These Days**, in September 2018. I had just started writing my own music a few months before my first album release and am making up for lost time by releasing three albums in 3 years. I really did not have much direction as far as where to go with my music after my first two releases. I just wanted to get my music recorded and

was promoting it through my local following and local public radio station. With my latest release, I targeted an audience outside of my local area with the help of “Another Blues is Knocking Radio Promotions”. Finally, my music was being heard internationally. For my latest album, I went to a different recording studio (Trebla Studios in Melbourne, Fl) and worked with an engineer who understood my “sound” and what I wanted to do with this album. The songs on **Help Wanted**, like all my originals, are a mixture of soul, rock, and blues.

ND: What is the music scene / blues scene like where you are in Florida?

GR: I live in Brevard County Florida and, in this area, there is not much of a blues scene or original music scene at all. Sadly, most of the gigs available are at restaurants and bars where cover bands rule. There is a much stronger music scene for blues and original artists in Northern and West Coast Florida. I hope, after this pandemic is behind us, that I can travel to those areas and perform.

ND: And what is your opinion of the music business?



GR: As with any business, making money is key. In the music “business”, the musician becomes the marketable product. When the musician is independent, providing they can afford to self-release their music, and control their path, I think they are in a much better position. Under some recording deals/contracts and management agencies, you are at their mercy as far as what image they want, what music they want you to release, what “box” they want you to fit into. I love that artists can now gain success independent of the “business”.

ND: What plans do you have for the future?

GR: I am going to be heading back into the studio very soon to start recording my fourth album. Ultimately, I would love to be able to perform at festivals and music venues where the music is the focus. Perhaps a small tour outside of the United States. That is my vision. I have only just begun.

ND: Anything else you want to say?

GR: I really want to encourage people to go after their passion and their dreams, no matter what others may say. The title song from my first album, **Fly On** is all about that. My own story will hopefully inspire others. I spent many years fronting cover rock and roll bands. I made a good living from it. I was rarely out of work, and I did not aspire to anything beyond that musically. I took a brief hiatus from music, performing part time versus full time while attending college and getting a degree in nursing. After that I combined a life as an ICU and Emergency Department nurse with music for many years. About 7 years ago, feeling very frustrated with trying to start and hold together my own band, I decided to take some guitar lessons so that I could perform independently of others. I started getting solo work locally about 3 years after starting lessons. I wrote my first song four years ago and have three album releases with a fourth starting up shortly. The takeaway is that there is no expiration date on when you can go after your dream. Fly On!

BiTS INTERVIEW: BILL FILIPIACK

BiTS: I saw a message that you posted on the Internet a few days ago, in which it appears that you're a person who is into almost everything in the world. Tell me something about your life. How you managed to get where you are now.

BF: I, as a kid, was enamoured with radio. I grew up listening to Danny Neaverth on WKBW in Buffalo New York, and I was enthralled with radio. I got the bug really early and it was to me the root of the community and it's where I heard my favourite music and was introduced to things that I was unfamiliar with and that kind of got me going. I ended up studying radio and communications in college and had my first radio show when I was in college as a freshman. Got my first job at WDOE in Dunkirk, New York, and I eventually ended up moving to Los Angeles to pursue a career in radio and studied audio and sound and music and ended up at KZLA in Los Angeles and then eventually Premiere Radio Networks in Los Angeles, and that was for me the beginning. I am surrounded by music and amazing artists. I was writing myself at that point and started playing out at different



coffee houses and pubs around the Los Angeles area and that was kind of the beginning for me.

BiTS: You were already a guitar player then, weren't you?

BF: I started playing piano by ear as a kid. My parents tried to get me to take lessons and I was too boneheaded. [Chuckling] I was, I was awful, but it was very easy for me to hear songs on the radio and then play them. I had an ear. When I was in high school, I was in a high school band and the bass player and I, I traded one of my keyboards for a 12-string acoustic and so I taught myself guitar around the age of 14 or 15 just because it was easier to play out with guitar than it was to carry a keyboard with me all the time. I first started playing guitar when I was in high school and I pretty much just taught myself.

BiTS: When you moved to LA, what sort of music were you playing?

BF: What kind of music? It was somewhat roots in nature. It was very James Taylor. A little bit more popish. James Taylor, that acoustic smooth, easy stuff and a lot of it was I was young, so the lyrics weren't really all that deep. I wasn't a rebel and I wasn't into politics or anything so I just kind of went with the simple love songs and songs about personal angst and just kind of started from there.

BiTS: Yes, yes. When you go about writing a song, Bill, how do you do it?

BF: You know, what I like about the song writing process is for me it's never the same journey twice. There will be times where I'll just figure out a cool little lick on the piano or on the guitar or a new sound and I'll work up some kind of a riff and a little track and then put some lyrics to it. Sometimes you wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning with an inspirational thought or something that's just feeding your soul and you write it down and then you put music to it, and sometimes they come together at the same time. Some songs take two or three months and some you write in 15 minutes. It's a different process every time, and I love that and when I moved to Nashville, I had written pretty much on my own at that point, and Nashville's just a different game. I mean here you get writing sessions, appointments and co-writes and that's an entirely different animal where you come in with a title and then everybody sits down and contributes their part of it. But for me, it's different with pretty much every song. There's a different inspiration behind it.

BiTS: At some stage, Bill, you started doing record producing as well for people. How did that happen?

BF: When I was with Premiere Radio Networks, I initially started writing parody songs for the morning shows that were part of our network and so each week my partner and I had to write and produce five parody songs. We had to do a country, an oldies, an AC, a rock. We had to do five a week and back then you didn't have the karaoke tracks the way you have today. We had to recreate the music beds for all these songs and so I got really into mimicking and copying the sounds of each of the parts of the songs through keyboards and my guitars and then writing the parody songs. While I was with Premiere, I think if I'm not mistaken, we wrote five a week for four or five years. I probably produced somewhere around 2500 parody songs, so you kind of get good at it after a while. We actually had a song about Hillary Clinton called 'I am Hillary', a parody of I Am Woman by Helen Reddy that got us on Inside Edition on that entertainment show. It was pretty cool.

BiTS: It sounds like a lot of hard work.

BF: My dad told me when I was growing up, he said you're better off to do something that you can do easily and be the best at, than something you might be interested in that you have to work your butt off and only be second best and you're constantly going to be working too hard. For me music and radio, it's just such a passion and something that I enjoy so much that the amount of time that I put into it, being able to sit down and play with music all day, that was fun. Yes, it's hard work sometimes. It gets monotonous. Also working in radio you support other artists and your job is to get to know them and help promote them and help get the word out about them and I was just enthralled getting to know all these different artists and musicians and when I moved to Nashville that was a big part of it. I was enthralled getting to know these artists and I started while I was in LA because of my video background I got hired to do music editing for *Power Rangers* and *V.R. Troopers*



and a lot of these kids shows. Through that I started getting into television, then I learned more about camera shooting. When I got to Nashville, I started doing marketing pieces for artists and started to get to know them better and started directing music videos and got into that world and I found myself gravitating towards Americana and Blues and a lot of the independent artists who really didn't have the support teams. And I loved that. I felt like I always rooted for the underdog and in the process, I discovered a whole new genre of music that I had never heard and a lot of other people had never heard and I found myself gravitating towards trying to help them. The budgets weren't really what some of the major artists were, but it was fun, and they were so appreciative, working with people like Sarah Jarosz, Molly Tuttle and Brian Wright, Bryan Sutton and these guys. It was such a creative collaboration on the videos as well as the music that they were just fun to work with, so I found myself more and more gravitating towards that genre. Of course, and the influences for me tended to lean that way and so when I would sit down and start writing, being around those people, you just naturally tend to gravitate towards that style of music.

BiTS: Is that what provoked you into making your own album, the first one being, I think, 'Put The Top Down'?

BF: I remarried about four years ago and it'll be four years in September, and I would fiddle around with my guitar and I wrote my wife a couple of songs and she was like "why are you not doing more with this?". I said I really don't have the time to market myself and play out as much as I used to, and I've got a full-time gig and I love working with these other artists. She just really encouraged me to pursue it and I found a friend of mine here in town, Shawn Byrne, who was a musician in town and he also had a little studio and we produced my first album and I really got into that process. I sent it out and I didn't really promote it that much but it kind of got the juices flowing and my wife was so encouraging that I just started writing again and it just kind of started that whole thing.

BiTS: Your latest album is called 'Brand New Me'. I find it absolutely delightful. Why is it called that?

BF: If you listen to most of the tracks a lot of them will have references to a rebirth or a self-evaluation and at the time when I got remarried, it was going through a period where I saw some traits of mine that I had picked up from my father that I liked and then I saw some traits from my father that I didn't like and I started to take a look at myself and I thought, I'm 50, I'm in my early fifties and I want to continually grow and I do believe that if we don't evolve, if we're not constantly trying to improve ourselves then I think we wither and I think we die. I think it's important to continually be looking at ways that we can improve ourselves. If you listen to 'Brand New Me', the very first line, I need to make some new mistakes. If you don't like the path that you're on, take a look at the decisions you're making and if you keep ending up hitting the wall over and over again, perhaps it's time to make some new mistakes and you're going to make mistakes and that's okay, but if you keep making the same mistake over and over again, you're going to end up in the same position every time. It's the same thing with 'Another Dead End'. It

speaks to those habits that we have that we know they're bad for us, but we gravitate to them because they're familiar to us. They're the easy route and it's very easy to get trapped into those bad habits and those bad habits typically land us in the exact same place every time. For 'Brand New Me', a lot of the songs talk about resurrection and rebirth and taking efforts to look at yourself and change for the good. At 54, writing and producing and releasing music, I try and teach my kids, it doesn't matter how old you are. If you have a dream and something you're passionate about, it doesn't matter if you're 20, 50, 70, you should constantly be trying to create and share and speak to the world. I think that's very important.

BiTS: You're working for Opry Entertainment. What exactly do you do?

BF: A dear friend of mine who I've known in Nashville for about 20 years, was working with Opry and he was looking for a producer to help create a series of marketing materials and as a producer and a director, I went on a contract basis and I fell in love with it. I had been there before, but I walked into the Opry backstage as they were preparing for a show and you just felt the history and you saw all the artists and the

Click the picture to see images and hear a live C broadcast featuring
Hank Williams - Grand Ole Opry - 1949

musicians. It was just everything that I had done in my life kind of came to a focal point there and then to walk into the Ryman and have that history surrounding you. Somebody who had worked in radio and marketing and video and music, the Opry for me encapsulates all of it and I feel like a kid in the candy store. I get to sit down and talk with so many of these

incredible artists like Hays Carll and Ray Wiley Hubbard and Larkin Poe and Steve Earle, and it's remarkable and they're right there and you get to talk with them. I do a series called The Write Stuff and I get to talk to them about their processes and what inspires them and for me, I'm like a kid in a candy store. It's just an amazing experience to be able to sit there and take all that in and help them and promote and work with them. I think that's my favourite part of the job. We talk a lot about the Opry being family and that's what it is. I get to create a television series and marketing materials that help promote this remarkable music, not just country but Americana and Roots and Bluegrass. I tell you what, the hard part is you spend an evening

hanging out with Tyler Childers and Ray Wiley Hubbard and Vince Gill and all these remarkable artists and then you sit down and try to write at home, it's kind of intimidating because you walk away going oh my God. I can't hold a candle to these people.

BiTS: Let me say, you most certainly can.

BF: That's very nice of you. I think along with being inspired by their writing and their playing, I think I'm inspired by so many of them who work so hard at it and it's fun to them and they invite you in. So many of them do it their way and they stand behind what they believe in and they don't



Ray Wiley Hubbard

care what everybody else says. They say you write for yourself; you write for people. You don't do it to get a hit. You do it because it's something you have to do and that alone I think inspires people to sit down and do their own music.

BiTS: I don't know whether you realise it but coming to Nashville for people like me is like Americans coming here and seeing [00:20:45]. I made a trip to Nashville about 20 years ago, I guess it was, and it was like living in a dream, absolutely fabulous.

BF: Nashville has grown so much of the last 15-20 years since I've been here and it has evolved and

what I love about it musically is it has allowed for an expansion of what the definition of country music is. I love the fact that the singer-songwriter is coming back. Lyrics are so important and the growth of the Americana Music Association and the International

[Bluegrass Music Association](#), I think that these institutions are inspiring young artists to come up through the ranks, not just to become country superstars, but to really hone their craft as musicians and songwriters and there are so many in the rounds and so many writing opportunities and so many places to play out and I think that's my favourite part of it. You can hear so many different styles of music now and I love to see the youth. I was at the World of Bluegrass in Raleigh a couple of years ago doing some filming and it was the young kids. It was the 12-year-olds, the 15-year-olds playing their hearts out on the banjos and the fiddles and the guitar. It was remarkable how good they were and the support that they had from people like Jerry Douglas and Bryan Sutton and Sarah Jarosz and all these artists coming up in the ranks and they had people mentoring them and teaching them. I love that and that's what Nashville is becoming. It really is. That's why it's not just country music, it really is music city.

BiTS: That sounds absolutely fabulous. Bill, have you been badly affected by COVID-19?



Jerry Douglas

BF: Yes, when it hit we pretty much went into lockdown for a good six to eight weeks. Fortunately, because of my work and what I do, I was able to do a lot of it from home. We had to stop filming, but we already had so many shoots in the can that needed editing and I mean technology is just incredible and I was able to oversee edits from home and Zoom with editors and our production teams and go over things and we started coming up with shows that the artists could film a lot of it at home and then we would edit it and they just had to upload the footage. I myself have been remarkably fortunate that I've been able to keep my job and keep working and it was in March that I finished my album just because I had time and I was recording a lot of it at home and so I got that wrapped up. The hard part has been watching the effect it's had for my kids. My daughter graduated from high school, but she couldn't have a prom. They couldn't have their normal graduation. So many of the activities that a senior will go through were all cancelled and null and void and her birthday was in April and she was stuck. There was nothing we could do about it and it was hard for them to understand as youngsters. They didn't understand why are we not able to go out? Why are we not able to do things? Then as things progressed, some people let their kids go out and do stuff and we were still really cautious about it and it's hard to judge and I know everybody over there is going through the same thing. How do you know? It's so new and it changes

every day, so you don't know what to believe and what is the right thing to do, so from a family standpoint that was the hard part was watching the kids. They cancelled soccer season for my son. Being able to hang out with their friends was off the table and I think after four months of it, and I think you would agree, I think the hardest part about it is just the stress. The daily stress worrying about all of this and seeing it happen and wondering what are we supposed to do and when is it going to end and how do we get past all of this? For people who don't have their jobs and don't have work, trying to make ends meet. The hard part for me was the musicians. Artists having a backing in song writing and they have some means of income even if they're not touring, not as much, but for me, it's the musicians and the support groups. The videographers, the roadies, the techs, the stage managers, they don't have a fan base. They rely on the musicians and the artists to support them during touring. I think it's been hardest for them and I really feel for them and have been trying to help come up with ways that we can help support the musicians and the support groups who are really hurting right now.

BiTS: Bill, I don't want to take too much more of your time. Can I ask you one more question? What are your plans personally for the immediate future? Are you going to be doing another album, or what?

BF: I am currently writing album number three and I am following the lead of friends of mine like Maggie Rose and Tenille Townes and Lera Lynn and a lot of these artists, it's not about hit records. It's not about being famous, it's about the craft. It's about having a creative outlet and now that I have kind of rekindled and found this new birth, so to speak, at 50, I'm just going to keep doing it. I love it and I'm hoping to start doing more co-writes and recording with some more friends of mine because I haven't done much of that. I tried really hard to respect my position at the Opry and keep my own music and what I'm doing separate and not muddy those waters. I have respect for the artists, but I think over time as you become friends with people and there are a couple that I'd like to have help me out, but for me, it's just going to be a continuation of what I'm doing. It's writing,

experimenting, learning. I want to learn how to play mandolin. I'm going to teach myself a little bit and keep growing and 'Brand New Me', it talks about rebirth and revaluation and growing and becoming a better person and I just want to continue doing that. My life right now is 100% music and I couldn't be happier. I'm very lucky, I'm very fortunate and I want to keep helping support this amazing genre of music.

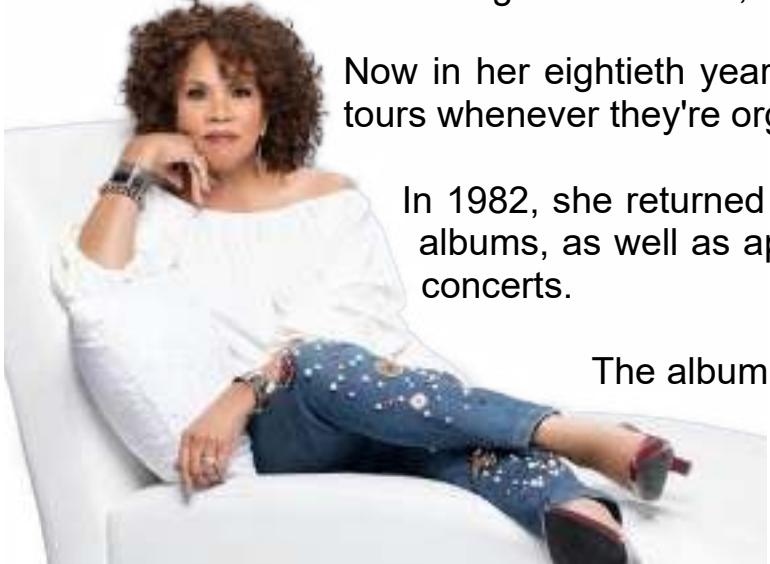


The Ryman Auditorium opened in 1892 as the Union Gospel Tabernacle. It was built by businessman Thomas Ryman for revivalist Samuel Porter Jones. After Ryman died in 1904, the building was renamed in his honour. Site of Grand Ole Opry broadcasts, 1942-1974, then vacant until a series of Emmylou Harris concerts (1992) renewed interest in it. Restored in 1994; placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and National Historic Landmarks in 2001.

BiTS and Pieces: Stuff and occasional nonsense

TAKE ANOTHER LISTEN...

One of my favourite female singers is Candi Staton, who I at last had the pleasure of seeing and meeting at The Brook, Southampton in 2009.



Now in her eightieth year, she's lost none of her vocal abilities and still tours whenever they're organised.

In 1982, she returned to gospel music and produced some excellent albums, as well as appearing on many gospel television shows and concerts.

The album I took another listen to was 'His Hands' (2006), her return to secular music and released on Honest Jons Records. Instantly, the Fame sessions cut with producer Rick Hall seemed to be continuing exactly where they left off, back in the seventies! Just listen to the first three

songs.... 'You Don't Have Far To Go', 'When Hearts Grow Cold' and 'It's Not Easy Letting Go'.... Mark Nevers (the producer) should be congratulated on a first class job for the whole album.

All eleven tracks are of the highest quality, vocally and musically, as you'd expect from an artist of such standing. Soul, blues and a little gospel, make this an album worth grabbing if you see it.

Bob Pearce

Deep Blue Sea - Lock It Up - Live in the Lockdown

Deep Blue Sea, like virtually all bands during the lockdown and beyond, have been unable to get together and play - but by the magic of the interweb - from 4 locations around London - attics, bedrooms and bathrooms! - they have recorded 3 songs under the banner "Lock It Up" - a reference to their 2018 album recorded at Harpenden Rock and Blues Festival. The tracks, which were also captured on phones and Zoom cameras and put together as clips, are 'The Well' - a Texas boogie from their album 'Strange Ways', 'Orphans of the Storm'—an old slow blues Little Devils' song, and 'I Still Need You'—a previously unreleased song - featuring a mystery harp player. All of the songs have been changed a little here and there because of the lockdown and together the band hopes they create a snapshot of life as it is at the moment—and also—give a positive look to the future. We're all in this together - and we all need to care and be kind to each other. The clips are all on the band's home page at www.deepblueseamusic.co.uk and if you would like an mp3 of any or all of the tracks - just drop them an email to deepblueseamusic@btinternet.com and the band will send you the downloads.

KAZ HAWKINS: HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO ETTA JAMES

As I write this, here in the States, sometimes violent Black Lives Matter protests are still taking place across our nation. The sensitivity to racial inequality is very raw for African-Americans at this time in American history. So a white Irish woman with a successful show and CD using the music of a black American female blues icon caught my attention!

SPECIAL REPORT

Belfast born [Kaz Hawkins](#) has always made clear her debt to blues treasure Etta James. She has also been very open about her struggles with childhood abuse, addiction, attempted suicide, and mental health.

Yet through it all, she's still managed to build a very successful award winning career in both music and broadcasting.

As we continue to face the long standing challenges brought to us via the global pandemic, I can't think of anyone I'd rather talk to about making it through this crisis than Kaz Hawkins! And ... she has a new CD titled "Memories Of".

This is what Kaz told me

LL: So how did a girl from Northern Ireland come to connect with American blues music?

KH: I auditioned for a UK TV talent show singing "Secret Love" by Doris Day when I was 12. The musical director told my grandmother to let me listen to Etta James and she bought me a tape from the market which had Etta singing 'St Louis Blues' on it. From that moment on I fell in love with that kind of music. To let go of all of yourself in a song was something I learned listening to Etta James & Aretha Franklin.



LL: Let's talk about your latest release "Memories Of". Can you tell us all about the show the music is from and what American blues artist Etta James means to you?

KH: The album came through demand from fans of the show, at the merch desk they would ask "where is the album with these songs" so we set about choosing the right songs from the show that would celebrate Etta & some of the greatest songwriters in history in the genre. I used to imagine myself as Etta when I was going through trauma. I would close my eyes and recreate what I thought she would be like live. There was no YouTube back then, so my imagination ran wild as I only had her artwork to go by. I grew up poor, so I didn't have a record collection, just that one tape for many years to go by.

LL: Here in the US we are experiencing a Black Lives Matter movement that is also rippling thought the UK. Do you experience any hostility for being a white woman performing the music of a famous black blues singer?

KH: I haven't experienced any hostility at all, people who enjoy the show see it for the artistry. Lots of people don't actually know who Etta James is and that is where the show educates people. It's also great for the next generation to learn about this iconic singer.

LL: Producing and performing a live show is very different from recording. Would you please talk about your recording process?



KH: Yes, usually that is the case but as we had the tour show in place it was just a matter of deciding which songs fitted an album most. We pretty much went in order of the set list on the songs we chose so fans would recognize the journey with us. We rehearsed in Feb and my drummer said, "we need to record this now as it sounds so good". He then built the songs from the ground up. We all wanted to stay true to these timeless classics but still be exciting and modern. We revisited the original recordings, analysed tempos and grooves as we wanted it to be authentic.

LL: How did you come to choose Wayne Proctor to mix and master, and what was that collaboration like?

KH: Wayne became my drummer at the end of 2019 in my original band so we had planned to record my new original album this year which he would produce but after asking my original band to become part of the Etta show we bonded so well in rehearsals that I wanted him to produce. I already knew how great he was as a mixer/engineer as I heard many albums he had worked on. He hadn't fully produced an album in a while so when we spoke, I wanted him to have free rein to give me something powerful yet empathetic to the songs. Wayne is very committed to giving the listener that journey I like to take people on. He is methodical in his approach but yet has a sensitive view of what the songs represent, a time past, an era of music to be honoured and never lost. He is truly a joy to work with and I trust him completely. It may be my name on the album, but it was Wayne who created a wall of sound for me to sing to.

LL: I'd love to know about your backing band on 'Memories Of'. Can you tell us about the musicians?

KH: Originally, I had lots of UK session musicians and it was separate to my original band, but I have now combined the core band in everything. On drums of course Wayne Proctor, then Alex Phillips on bass. My guitarist is from Belgium, Stef Paglia. We have Jon Trier on keys, he is our musical director (MD). Currently on horns it's Aaron Liddard (sax) and Simon Finch (trumpet). It may not be the same musicians all the time as everyone is freelance, but my core band is Wayne, Alex & Stef.

LL: So here we are in the throes of the Coronavirus pandemic. We musicians who perform live have all had the rug pulled out from under us. I've never been one who's suffered much from

depression, but I have to admit that I do now! You have been very open about your personal struggles. How is this pandemic affecting you and what are you doing to cope?

KH: At the start when COVID-19 attacked us from all sides I made a very public post on my Facebook page stating that I was depressed again. It had been a long time since those old habits tempted me so bad. I took a few days away from social media and I thought a lot about what I had previously come through and it shocked me back into reality. Perhaps because I have suffered depression most of my life, I had a reference, a reminder of what could lie ahead because it made me sit up and fight the



thoughts. I knew if I were to give in to the thoughts in my head, that I may never make it out again. I think the biggest thing with people during COVID-19 is the isolation. I realized after making that public statement that I am now actually ok with being alone but that is something that took me many years to work on. Someone who hasn't really suffered depression until lockdown will go into shock really. It is trauma after all! With life shutting down and everyone cocooned away from the rest of the world is a shock to the system, especially when humans are such social creatures. That need for human contact, a touch, conversation, laughter, just taken from us as if we had done something wrong. I suspect mental health is on a downward spiral and I fear the numbers will increase tenfold coming out of this pandemic. I just hope governments pay attention and work to have something in place. It has been a tough fight for

anyone working to highlight Mental Health Awareness, and now it's ten steps back. Add to that, people losing their livelihoods in the blink of an eye, I dread to think what's to come. My only hope is that people now realize more than ever that it's ok to talk openly about how they're feeling. It is sometimes the difference between life and death.

LL: What can your fans look forward to from you?

KH: Of course, we are still promoting 'Memories Of' and a return of the touring show will hit the road from October here in France and then 2021 will see us take it to Greece, Switzerland, with more to be announced so it's looking great for the Etta show. We've also started on my next original album which will be released next year which I'm excited for as I haven't released any originals in a few years. I also have my BBC Radio show 'Kaz Hawkins Got The Blues' which is running now for 10 weeks which was recorded here in my home in France with the wonders of technology. All in all, I'm looking forward to coming out of this pandemic and getting back touring in 2021 and seeing the fans. I miss them dearly.

~ Lawrence Lebo

Lawrence Lebo is an award winning, critically acclaimed Blues recording artist living in Los Angeles, CA, USA. She can be found on the web at www.lawrencelebo.com [CLICK HERE FOR MORE.](#)

DIVERSITY SHOULD BE A KEY FOUNDATION OF THE BLUES IN THE UK



We at the UKBlues Federation (UKBF) have been extremely disturbed to hear of instances of continuing racial prejudice and discrimination within the UK blues community, something which we, as individuals and as an organisation, abhor and to which we are totally opposed.

We have heard of cases of venues allegedly not offering gigs to members of the BAME community and, worse still, cancelling bookings already made, apparently on grounds of race. It is difficult enough for all musicians to survive at present and it is totally unacceptable for this to be happening.

The UKBF has made its stance on this very clear and we are currently finalising our own diversity policy to which we will adhere to the very best of our endeavours. We are already taking steps to seek to ensure greater diversity in the Board of the UKBF and will be making a further announcement in this respect soon.

We call upon everybody within the UK blues community - venues, festivals, musicians, agents, management, record labels, radio presenters and fans alike - to take steps to ensure that they too become more diverse and help us all move away from the current climate of discrimination, inequality and lack of diversity.

Stay safe, stay well.

Ashwyn Smyth
Chair
UKBlues Federation

Visit www.ukblues.org to find out more about the UKBlues Federation, how to support our work and to join.



KING KING ANNOUNCE STEVIE NIMMO AS THE NEWEST MEMBER PLUS OCTOBER 2020 UK TOUR

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+ RESCHEDULED FEBRUARY 2021 UK TOUR

King King are going to be back on tour again in the UK this year! The Glaswegian rockers' **October UK Tour** went on sale on **Friday 17th April** via www. kingking.co.uk/tour and www.thegigcartel.com. What's more, guitarist **Stevie Nimmo** will join King King on the tour as the band's newest member!



Says Alan Nimmo: "*As it already felt like it was so long since we had the chance to play in front of our UK fans, the tour in April had us so excited with anticipation. So, you can imagine our disappointment when it had to be postponed!!!*

However, it brings us great joy to know that we'll be playing some dates in October and that at least for some.... the wait will be over!

I am really looking forward to properly showcasing the new line-up for our fans. I can confirm that the lads are super excited to get out there and play for you. We have been working so hard on the new album and the results have been so satisfying... the response to our first single "I Will Not Fall" which was A-listed on Planet Rock has been amazing.

As I have done on several occasions in the past when it comes to writing... I enlisted the talents of my big bro (Stevie Nimmo) to add some of his flavour to the songs alongside the other lads and when you hear the new album you'll be able to spot his voice in the background on several songs. This started me thinking that it was time to take the next step in the natural evolution of King King! So not only will Stevie be present on the new album but when we embark on our October tour you will see an addition to our already outstanding line-up of Jonny Dyke, Zander Greenshields and Andrew Scott... we will welcome Stevie to King King as our newest member!

This is something that I have been thinking about for a long time and I feel now is the right time. I am extremely happy to bring Stevie in to the band as I feel that musically we raise to another level and it will be so exciting not only us but for our fans too who I know already have a lot of love and respect for him!

For more information and images, click here – www.noblepr.co.uk/press-releases/king-king/uk-tour-2020-2021.htm

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MusicGurus and BiTS believe that you should only pay for what you use so we don't charge subscriptions. Buy lessons and personal tutoring sessions with a one-off payment and that's it, they're yours to watch whenever, wherever and as many times, as you want.

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

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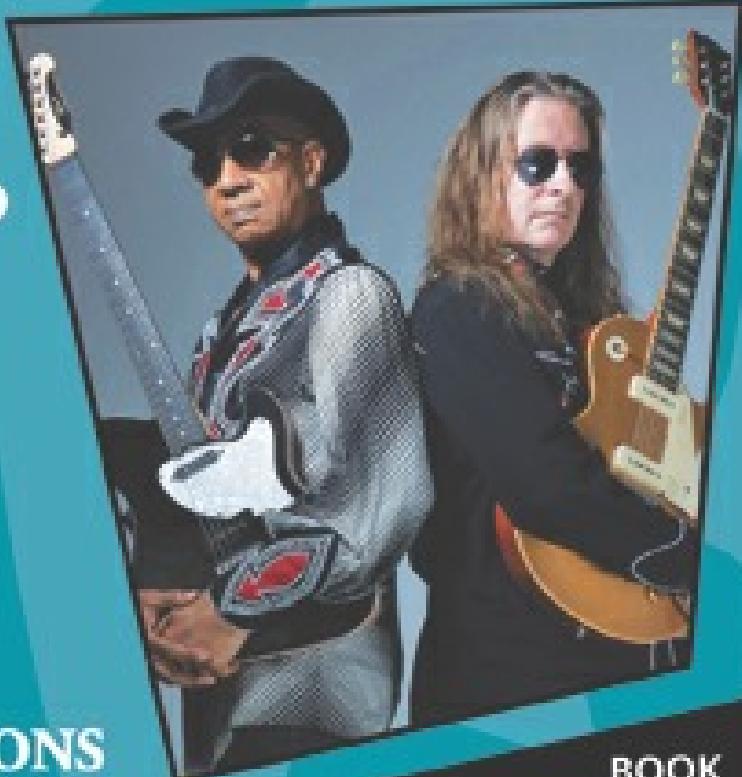
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Eric Gales has rescheduled his 2020 UK tour to February 2021 and has added two extra dates at the Brighton Concorde (Feb 3) and the Dover Booking Hall (Feb 4). The tour follows the release of his album 'The Bookends' via Provogue/Mascot Label Group earlier in 2019. The album features collaborations with B. Slade, Doyle Bramhall II and Beth Hart. Tickets for the Brighton Concorde and Dover Booking Hall shows go on sale via www.thegigcartel.com. Tickets for all the other shows that have been rescheduled are still valid.

Special guest on all shows is the critically acclaimed British Blues rock guitarist Danny Bryant. Hailed as "A National Blues Treasure", Bryant recently released his 11th studio album 'Means of Escape' via Jazzhaus Records to a great fanfare.

The challenge for making 'The Bookends' was for Gales to push himself. "As a guitar player it's been established that I can play a little bit, just a little bit", he smiles. But for this album he not only wanted to motivate himself as a musician, but also as a vocalist, to build up his vocal discography. "What spearheaded that was the artists that I have on the record", he says.

Written over a nine month period, the album was recorded at Studio Delux, Van Nuys, California, The Dog House, Woodland Hills, California, Blakeslee Recording, North Hollywood and the day before he was due to fly to LA for pre-production the original producer David Bianco tragically died. It was Bianco's management who then suggested Matt Wallace. "I heard his work and the kind of people he has produced such as Maroon 5, Faith No More and all these cats. When we met up together it was just perfect. I just trusted the guy and it ended up being great, I love Matt Wallace", says Gales.

For more information, click here – www.noblepr.co.uk/press-releases/eric-gales/2021-uk-tour.htm

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**Red's Blues Band—Broke down in the Fast Lane—Own Label**

This four-piece band out of Sacramento, California came to my attention some months ago with the release of the rather pointed digital single 'Flim Flam Man', reviewed in these very pages. It's good to hear more, and the presence of such guests as guitarist Rockin' Johnny Burgin, blues harp maestro Rick Estrin, and engineer and electric piano player Kid Andersen is some indicator of how highly regarded this outfit is.

The title track opens the set, a lovely lazy shuffle with an excellent vocal by Beth Reid-Grigsby and some harmonica playing by the band's guitarist Doug Crumpacker low in the mix, and is followed by the aforementioned 'Flim Flam Man', here as more of a straight mid- to up tempo blues. 'Road Scholar' has a fine retro-styled sound and production, whilst 'Howling Winds' has more than a tinge of the 20s vaudeville blues in Beth's vocals, Big Maceo in the piano work of Sid Morris and Sonny Boy Williamson Nos. 1 and 2 in Rick Estrin's wonderful harp blowing – it works!

'Jacknifed' sung by bass-player RW Grigsby (I think – and he also supplies excellent upright bass playing on some tracks) is loosely akin to Chuck Berry, 'Sweet Karma' has hints of The Rolling Stones though Beth's singing reminds me of Bobbie Gentry (!), whilst 'Forty Years Of Trouble' has a boogaloo blues sound. 'A Word About Gossip' has that classic swamp blues sound, 'G.O.N.E.' harks back to 50s rhythm & blues, and has maybe just a slight tint of rockabilly, and 'Hands Off' is sultry and jazzy (nice drumming by Tim Wilbur too), before the album closes with 'Say What!', an early 60s styled guitar instrumental showcase for Doug and Rockin' Johnny. Impressive all round!

Norman Darwen

(www.redsbluesband.com)

**Jon Strahl Band—Heartache and Toil—Own Label**

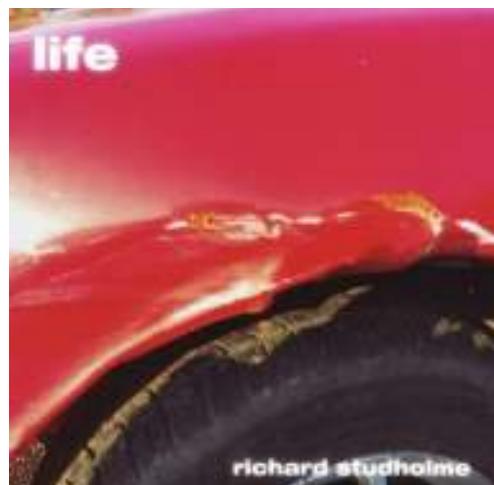
This is a rather impressive album from this band out of Indianapolis, their third release, following on from an album and a five track EP. Jon grew up in the 80s, listening to a wide variety of blues on the radio, and this wide range of influences comes through on this album. He has a good voice, and a fine guitar style - and his song-writing is good, with interesting, meaningful compositions - the twelve songs here are all originals.

Stylistically, he ranges across almost the entire spectrum of contemporary blues, from the wistful lilt of 'Day After Day', with its soul-drenched vocal, horns, and spot-on band to the raw, distorted Mississippi Hill Country drive of 'How Long'. Or if you prefer, from the blues-rock and classic soul influences of the opening 'Hey Yeah All Right' to the acoustic introduction on the southern rock - inflected sound of 'So Real' and the atmospheric closing solo acoustic instrumental, 'Indiana Moonrise'.

The title track has an inventive rhythm, 'The Right Thing' has just the merest tinge of Jimi Hendrix in the guitar work, and 'Leave Me Alone' has traces of Ray Charles, whilst 'The Weight I Feel' is a convincing southern soul performance, and the band is spot-on. All in all, a very listenable modern blues set with enough individual touches to mark Jon out as a name to watch.

Norman Darwen

(www.jonstrahlband.com)



Richard Studholme—Life—Tonezone Cd0025

UK blues singer and guitarist Richard first came to many people's attention through his work for JSP Records in the 80s and 90s when he frequently toured and recorded with many visiting American blues artists - think of Hubert Sumlin, Carey Bell, Lurrie Bell, Bill Dicey, Lucky Lopez Evans, Mojo Buford and others. He has continued to play and sing since then, and this album , originally released in 2012, is now being promoted again.

It is a fine set too, a tribute to the blues, R'n'B and soul from the late 50s through to the early 70s. Richard would always open the sets with a couple of numbers of his own, and it is good to report that he is still in fine fettle. He obviously appreciates The Rolling Stones - he plays a fine cover of their instrumental '2120 South Michigan Avenue' and they also get a mention on Richard's own 'Little Mystery'. Another influence would seem to be Roy Lee Johnson, who wrote 'Mr Moonlight', later covered by the Beatles, when he was a member of Piano Red's band in the early 60s - here Richard covers the soul-styled 'Love Is Amazing' and the equally excellent but bluesier and more up tempo classic 'She Put The Whammy To Me'. There's another Beatles connection too in 'You've Really Got A Hold On Me', The Miracles number cover by the Mop-tops in 1963, and Richard does it justice here too... But then, the whole album is rather classy. A tight band, lovely horns and backing vocals, and excellent material throughout. Worth checking it out!

Norman Darwen

Laura Evans—Running Back to You—Rosie Music (EP)



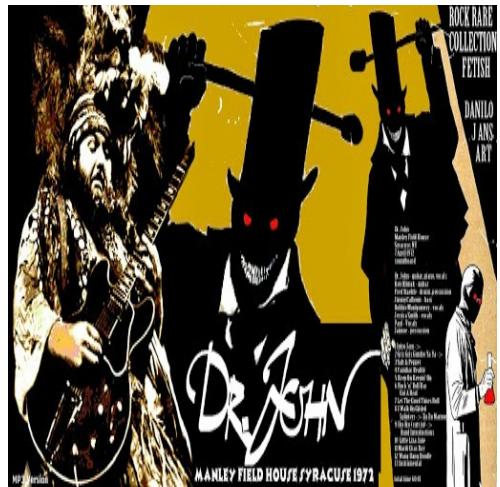
Laura Evans is a young singer from Aberdare in south Wales who has already had quite a career, from singing with relatives in Wales to being a television personality and appearing in Hollywood movies. It was during the latter spell that her music career really took off, as Laura spent time in Nashville, and that has certainly left its mark on this five track set; rather ironically maybe, the track 'Aberdare' is a fine piece of country laced Americana.

There is also a strong piano ballad entitled 'Mess Of Me', but do take a listen to the rootsy, pounding soul of the title track, here in two versions, one with an acoustic-based but still powerful sound. Then there's the blues-rock of the opener, 'Drag Me Back', with its hint of Janis Joplin in the vocal, powerful but with an under-current of vulnerability.

Laura is an excellent vocalist and song writer. Hopefully we will get an album release soon, but in the meantime, this is certainly worth a listen.

Norman Darwen

(www.thelauraevans.com)



Dr. John—Live Manley Field House, Ny. 7/4/72; Great American Radio Vol. 5—Floating World Floatm6402

Ah, the late Mac Rebennack, in between being a precocious young New Orleans rocker and R'n'B arranger in the late 50s and early 60s, and Mac Rebennack the revered New Orleans music ambassador of his later years. As "Doctor John The Night Tripper", he was a hippie hero, though careful listening reveals he was still true to his Crescent City roots; he just took the "New Orleans hoodoo" angle and went further out with it, both musically and visually.

There is plenty of that on this set, recorded when he was opening act for The Allman Brothers, things like 'Gris Gris Gumbo Ya Ya' and the mis-spelled medley of 'I Walk On Guilded Splinters/ Zu Zu Mamou'. But this set was recorded just before the release of his "Gumbo" album, a superb tribute to the city's classic sounds, opening and closing respectively with 'Iko Iko' and 'Little Liza Jane' – and both are present here, as well as several other rhythm 'n' blues items too. There is also, rather surprisingly, a cracking version of the Chicago blues staple, 'Wang Dang Doodle'.

I have to confess though, that things can be rather ragged in places, and in that sense, this album is very much of its time. If you appreciated the Night Tripper, yes, you'll definitely want it, but this is not the best place to make Mac Rebennack's initial acquaintance. Try one of his later albums for that, and then you'll probably want to work your way back to this.

Norman Darwen

The Allman Betts Band—Bless Your Heart—Bmg

The Allman Betts Band—Bless Your Heart—Bmg

There is something of a southern rock revival going on at the moment, and The Allman Betts Band are right at the forefront of it. The band's lineage possibly has a lot to do with it - after all, when your musicians include Devon Allman (guitar, vocals), Duane Betts (guitar, vocals) and Berry Duane Oakley (bass, vocals), it couldn't possibly be otherwise - but then so too does their brand of bluesy rock in the grand old fashion and heartfelt Americana, and that is also due to other band members Johnny



Stachela (guitar and vocals), John Ginty (keyboards), John Lum on drums, and percussionist and vocalist R Scott Bryan. Even the CD title is uniquely southern.

Lend an ear to the majestic 'Carolina Song', the rough and ready 'King Crawler' with its vintage rock and roll inspiration, or 'Ashes Of My Lovers', very bluesy Americana with wailing blues harp in the mix too. But do just let the album roll on, through the 12 minutes-long jazz-tinged jam of 'Savannah's Dream', the country 'n' folk style of 'Rivers Run', the classic southern rock sound of 'Magnolia Road', the mutated blues-rock of 'Should We Ever Part' with its hints of Screamin' Jay Hawkins, a Johnny Cash-ish 'Much Obliged' and the New Orleans-tinted closing torch ballad 'Congratulations'.

All in all, this keeps up their predecessors' traditions. It's not a remake or a reconstruction, but building on the sound for a contemporary audience. And it's good listening .

Norman Darwen

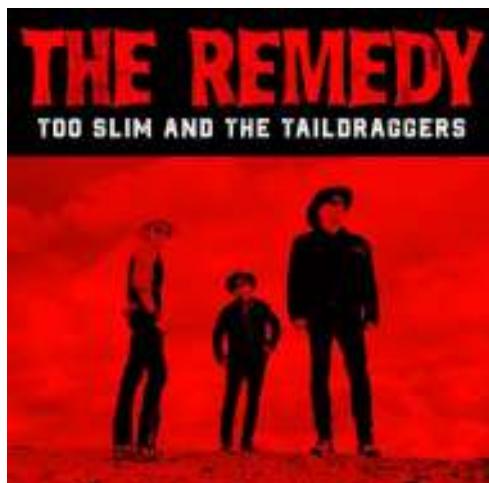


JW Jones—Sonic Departures—Solid Blues Records ASIN: Bo8BFTFHRC

Canadian guitarist singer JW Jones used the lockdown to turn isolation into inspiration, he bought recording hardware and taught himself how to use it, then he collaborated on the tracks with his band - Jesse Whiteley (keyboards), Jacob Clarke (bass) and Will Laurin (drums) - as well as engineer Eric Eggleston, who helped JW to produce and mix the tracks. Luckily before the lockdown they had already recorded contributions from a 13-piece horn section including five saxophones, four trombones and four trumpets! with the horn arrangements by Kaz Kazanoff (The Texas Horns) or Mr. Whiteley, and this brass adds interest throughout, without swamping JW and the band.

We begin with three originals 'Blue Jean Jacket', the soulful 'Same Mistakes' (with some stinging guitar) and the funky 'Ain't Gonna Beg' with more great guitar. We then have a run of covers starting with Albert King's 'Drowning On Dry Land', followed by an unusual swinging big band version of The Everly Brothers' 'Bye Bye Love', then it's more sweet soul with Clarence Carter's 'Snatchin' It Back'. We finish with two blues classics - a lovely authentic version of Guitar Slim's 'The Things That I Used To Do' and Will Jennings and Joe Sample's 'When It All Comes Down' as done by B. B. King and JW does B.B. proud with strong vocals and great blues guitar. This is a really good record that proves just what can be done even if musicians can't get together in the studio.

Graham Harrison



Too Slim and the Taildraggers—The Remedy—Vizztone ASIN: Bo89CSGD9X

When reviewing Slim's last album 'High Desert Heat' I said that the Taildraggers' blues-rock was a bit too ROCK for me and on the first track here 'Last Last Chance' they again rock out loud and proud, although 'She's Got the Remedy' is slower and more bluesy - a bit like Free - while 'Devil's Hostage' reminded me of ZZ Top with some nice lead guitar and gravelly vocals from Slim (Tim Langford). The album was recorded at bass player Zach Kasik's

Wild Feather Recording studio in Nashville and it does sound very good, big-sounding guitars and a pounding rhythm section of Kasik and Jeff "Shakey" Fowlkes on drums.

'Reckless' is a rocking, modern version of Bo Diddley with Richard Rosenblatt on harp and on the rocking "Keep the Party Rolling" Sheldon Ziro plays harp. 'Sunnyland Train' is a blasting Elmore James cover with Slim playing great slide and on 'Sure Shot' we drop the pace with Slim playing banjo on this moody ballad, while on "Platinum Junkie" Jason Ricci joins the party with his harmonica sounding as sharp and cutting as Slim's lead guitar. 'Snake Eyes' features more banjo, together with guitar and 'Think About That' is another rocker with harp, leaving just the closer 'Half a World Away' (not the Oasis song) a melodic rock song that to me didn't seem to fit with the rest of the album, although it does have a nice blues guitar solo. I thought that this was a better, more bluesy album than 'High Desert Heat' with the band showing that they can rock out but also be more subtle and although their basic power trio format works well on most of the tracks it was good to have the harp players adding another dimension to four tracks for a bit of variety.

Graham Harrison



**Errol Linton—No Entry—Brassdog Records ASIN :
Bo87QKBM9S**

Brixton (London) bluesman Errol Linton recorded this new album in Liam Watson's Toe Rag Studios with its analogue equipment and it really sounds great, it sounds really authentic from the opening moody instrumental 'No Entry Blues' to the 60s-sounding 'Fools for Love', with its echoes of Billy Boy Arnold. 'Sad and Lonesome' quotes lyrics from Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee's 'Walk On' and 'Rain in your Life' has Errol singing and playing harp over a funky backing with wah-wah guitar. The band is Kenrick Rowe (drums), Petar Zivkovic (keyboards), Adam Blake (guitar) and Lance Rose (bass). 'So Many Women' is a real rocker and 'Speak Easy' is a delicious mix of blues and dub while 'Howling for my Darlin' is the old Howling Wolf song given a reggae twist - it really works. The reggae influence continues on 'Love You True' but again it works really well and Fred McDowell's 'Got To Move' is rendered in a loping, murky mix with great harp - this is real tough blues - we then finish with the upbeat ska of 'Big Man's Gone (I'm on My Way)'.

I thought that this was an excellent album, first class blues but with Errol's unique addition of Jamaican influences - you can see why Joe Bonamassa was keen to work with him.

Graham Harrison

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A Band Called Sam—Legacy—Highlander Records



Sam “Bluzman” Taylor, was an American blues singer, songwriter, producer, and actor. He began his musical career during his military service when he was stationed at the Westhampton Beach Air Force Base in Long Island, NY. Sam passed away in 2009.

Not wanting the legacy of Sam’s work to dissipate, a group of his former band members and of his family. got together to keep his music alive—hence, A Band Called Sam. The band consists of Sam’s daughter Sandra Taylor, a singer in her own right; Sam’s grandson, Sandra’s son, Lawrence, ‘Law’ Worrell, guitar and vocal; Mario Staino, drums, Gary Grob, bassist, and Gary Sellars, Sam’s protégé, who plays guitar and sings. Keys are handled by Danny Kean.

There is also on the album an outstanding horn section, about which I can find nothing. Shame.

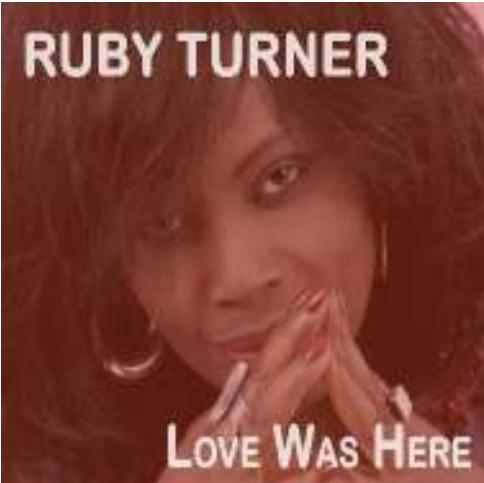
The music is stunningly good. Accomplished, full of fun and funky. The opener is ‘Stinger’ with some great horns, and a great vocals. Other tracks include, ‘Next in Line’, with some fabulous harmonies and Voice of The Blues, again with great horns and a sassy vocal from Sandra.

‘Papa Blues’ is a slow, strolling blues and IMHO is the best track on the album “Only the blues can talk to me. Only the blues know how I feel.” ‘Hole in Your Soul’, comes with a funky, wha-wah a la Isaac Hayes and arrangement that might have been done by Stevie Wonder. Love it.

By and large this is an outstanding album by the band. Long may it continue

Ian K McKenzie

Ruby Turner—Love Was Here—RTR Productions—ASIN: Bo81KPTT7N



Ruby Turner is a national treasure. In the USA artists are often given their own ‘day’ as a recognition of their talent. Time for e Ruby Turner Day! She was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours a couple of years ago (for services to music) but IMHO, the more accolades the better.

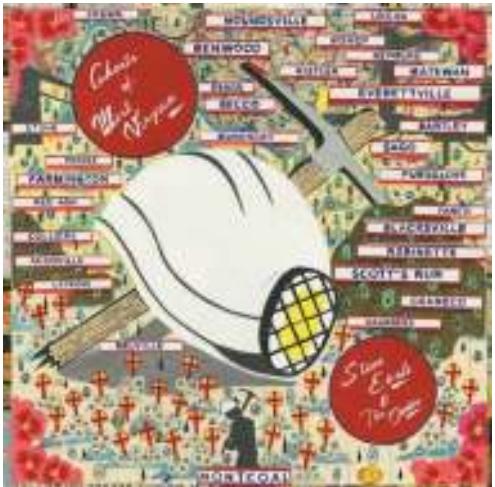
This is Ruby’s twentieth album and it is a stunner. Ruby says of it, “This Album is [the] one I’ve always wanted to make. The feel and grooves I’ve heard and loved: Curtis Mayfield, BB King,

Ry Cooder, The Reverend Al Green to name but a few.”

Chasing Love, the theme for the movie The Host, a personal and intimate ballad, is a delight. The title track Love ‘Was Here’ is another beauty. The years she has spent with Jules Holland hold her in good stead, enabling her to move from a tender ballad to a stomper like ‘Time Of Your Life’ with consummate ease. The whole thing is a master class in style, delivery and vocal expertise.

Wonderful

Ian K. McKenzie



Steve Earle & The Dukes—Ghosts of West Virginia—New West Records

There is a long tradition of celebrating, eulogising and memorialising coal and coal miners in American indigenous music. One of the greatest songs is Merle Travis'. 'Dark As A Dungeon' ("Where the rain never falls and the sun never shines, for it's dark as a dungeon way down in the mine.") and here are a few more to add to the genre.

The recording features his latest incarnation of Steve Earle's backing band The Dukes; Chris Masterson on guitar, Eleanor Whitmore on fiddle & vocals, Ricky Ray Jackson on pedal steel, guitar & dobro, Brad Pemberton on drums & percussion, and Jeff Hill on acoustic & electric bass.

The album is built around the Upper Big Branch coal mine explosion that killed twenty-nine men in West Virginia, on April 5, 2010 roughly 1,000 feet (300 m) underground in Raleigh County at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch coal mine located in Montcoal. Twenty-nine out of thirty-one miners at the site were killed. It was one of the worst mining disasters in American history. Investigations revealed hundreds of safety violations, as well as attempts to cover them up, and the mine's owners were forced to pay more than \$200 million in criminal liabilities.

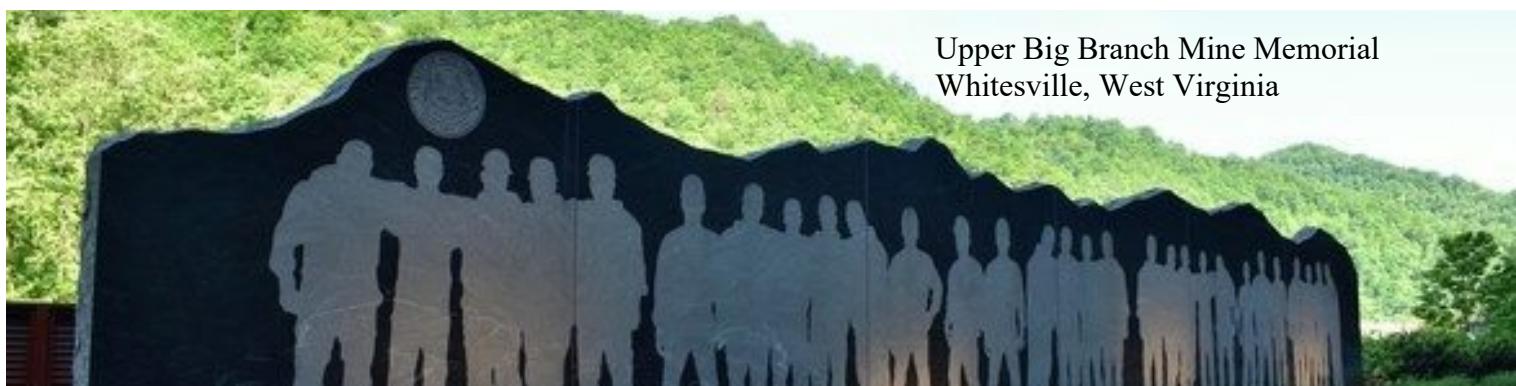
The music was created for a theatre piece about the Upper Big Branch disaster. Earle functions as "a Greek chorus with a guitar," as he puts it. He was on stage for the entire play and performed seven of the songs that lead Ghosts of West Virginia, including the powerful 'It's About Blood', in which Earle honours all the men who died.

[Click here to listen to 'Devil Put The Coal in the Ground.'](#)

This is a magnificent album, from a artist at the top of his powers, an award winner if I ever heard one. The album was produced by Steve Earle and engineered by Ray Kennedy at Jimi Hendrix's legendary Electric Lady Studios in New York City. The 10-song set is Earle's 20th studio album and was mixed entirely in mono. In recent years, Earle has experienced partial hearing loss in his right ear and can no longer discern the separation that stereo is designed to produce.

None the worse for that.

Ian K McKenzie



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