



BSWPA BLUESLETTER

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Can she play that horn??? YES, she can!!!!

The players had gathered. The audience was waiting. The late-night jam began with great gusto. Buddy Guy was front and center. People were filing on stage and off. It was a cast of big names, big players. The fans were dancing it up and working themselves into a frenzy. Side stage, Buddy Guy nodded his head towards the young lady patiently waiting. He was heard asking someone, 'Can she play that thing?'

Quietly, Vanessa Collier took her place on stage. She slowly raised her saxophone. When given the nod, that quiet young lady let loose. That sax wailed. That sound soared. The Blues fans furiously applauded and cheered. Buddy Guy turned to the audience and mouthed 'WOW'. Yes, Buddy Guy, she, Vanessa Collier, could play and play she did!!!!!! **WOW!**

Vanessa Collier was recently honored with the 2019 Horn Instrumentalist Blues Music Award. Yes, Buddy Guy, 'that girl can play that horn!'

The following is what Vanessa shared when asked about her musical journey.

Jonnye: What was your defining/deciding moment when you knew that you were destined to play music?

Vanessa: I knew it was something I wanted to do for a living in high school, maybe my sophomore year. I also played varsity and AAU basketball, which I started playing the year before starting saxophone. I thought I would go to college and juggle both, but I felt so much joy playing saxophone from the beginning and it just grew and grew the deeper I got into the musical world. I'd come home after seeing a concert and practice for a couple hours to try and play like the artist I had just heard. Learning from and playing with my teacher, Chris Vadala, changed my life. Those sessions helped me decide that music was the career path for me.

Jonnye: What was the process like being selected for Berklee?

Vanessa: I traveled with my family to Boston for my audition. At the audition, you perform pre-selected material plus sight read music in front of woodwind faculty/judges and then you have an interview with admissions. My mom and I both had goosebumps walking out of the audition hall. I knew that if I got accepted, I wanted to go to Berklee more than any other school where I had auditioned. After the audition at Berklee, we traveled back home. I then received an email during my music technology class that I had been accepted to Berklee. I just about jumped out of my chair! The following week, I found out I received a scholarship too and just couldn't wait!

Jonnye: Who have you followed to outline your musical footprint?

Vanessa: I've listened to a lot of people talk about the music business and how they navigate it musically and business-wise. A few of my professors at Berklee really taught me the music business, as well as visiting artists like Patrice Rushen, Kathy Mattea, and Annie Lennox. However, Bonnie Raitt, Norah Jones, James Brown, and The Wood

Brothers have influenced me heavily in the musical realm....and, of course, B.B. King, not just for the music but also for his humility and willingness to sit and talk with fans for hours after his shows for every single night for 300+ shows a year. I've taken pieces of each of these role models to form my own footprint.

Jonnye: On the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise, you played with many greats. It was pure joy watching you quietly go on stage and then everything would break loose once you were given the nod to go front and center. Are there highlights that you would like to share?

Vanessa: Thank you so much! I love and appreciate every moment that I am pulled in to play and sing on those cruises. Honestly, they are all highlights! Buddy Guy, Kingfish, Mr. Sipp, Marcus King, G Love, The California Honeydrops, Mike Welch and the Connection - I mean really, it's a joy to play with everyone!

Jonnye: You have been nominated for Blues Music Awards. Your star is quickly rising and shining very bright. What challenges await you as you move forward. What challenges stand out that you have had to overcome to be where you are at such a young age?

Vanessa: I think one of the biggest challenges early on was just allowing myself to express everything that I felt musically. I am very introverted and I always wanted to be respectful of everyone on stage by listening first and then attentively waiting to let loose. While I still do that, I've had to realize that I have to step out more (while still listening and allowing others to speak first). I also know that I have a powerful presence and to learn that outward confidence when it's my turn. I've become more and more comfortable allowing other people to see underneath the shy exterior to the real deep side of me that is strong, confident, persistent, and determined. Remaining true to myself in all things is really important to me. I know my vision and where I want to be. I know what I'm capable of. I steer clear of others who want to shape me into something that is not authentic to me. I just try to keep a calm, easy-going, empathetic, yet assertive and positive attitude through everything and keep moving forward.

Jonnye: What do you do to prepare for a concert?

Vanessa: I love to sit with some hot water and Throat Coat tea, do some light vocal warm ups, warm up the saxophone, and maybe do some light yoga and stretching. I like to have a little alone time to focus and drink lots and lots and lots of fluids!

Jonnye: It has been said that you embrace the chance to work with young people. What inspires you to mentor them?

Vanessa: I had many wonderful experiences with band directors that changed everything for me. One of those band directors introduced me to my mentor, Chris Vadala (aka "Mr. V"). Mr. V always said that all the best artists teach. He has traveled the world to work with woodwind players of all ages, jazz bands, and wind ensembles. He absolutely lit up when I saw him. He radiated passion and love for the music and the instruments. I saw that and was drawn to it. I was asked to start teaching an incoming 6th grader the summer before I entered 9th grade. I started hearing from this student's parents that he would light up after our lessons and be inspired to go play or listen to

whatever we talked about. I loved that feeling of knowing I was having such a positive impact on someone else's life.

My mom is a professor at the college level and I grew up watching her from the back of her night classes and watched how she would just energize the whole room with how she taught. She's changed a lot of her student's lives because she'd never give up on them and she wouldn't let her students give up on themselves. That was always inspiring to me growing up and it still is.

Vanessa: What are your long-term goals?

Jonnye: I would love to continue to make music that I love and that I'm super passionate about. I have lots of goals to learn different instruments and write a bunch of songs for myself and for other artists. I also just want to continue to live a happy life full of family, good friends, music, and great food!

Jonnye: What is it that you would like to be remembered for?

Vanessa: I would really love to be remembered for being kind, being fair, and for playing and writing my butt off!

Jonnye: A young person stops you at a show asking for your advice on how to advance their musical journey, what thoughts would you share?

Vanessa: To me, the journey is about constant learning, growing and changing while still keeping true to yourself. My best advice is to find what you are passionate about, research the history of whatever that is, and use all of that knowledge to try and better yourself and better the world. Don't let anyone tell you they know the path you want to travel. A lot of people try and say there is only one path to get where you want to go, but I believe that sometimes the path that requires more patience, determination, self-reliance, and thoughtfulness is the one that will deepen your understanding and plant roots that will ensure you'll end up where you want to be.

Vanessa Collier

Saxophonist - Vocalist - Songwriter

www.vanessacollier.com

Catch Vanessa Collier's dynamic show at the Pittsburgh Blues and Roots Fest in Cheswick, PA on the weekend of July 27 and 28.

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*SAVING LIVE MUSIC
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The winners of the 15th Annual 2019 Blues Challenge....

If you were not there, you really missed a great show!!!! Over and over, the fans commented on what a great show and a great mix of talent. Eight hours of music and fourteen acts, each giving their best twenty-minute set...what a plethora of Blues! The judges, each possessing extensive musical backgrounds, had the difficult job of determining the outcome. Each act was a winner, each was deserving but only two winners could be chosen for the trek to the 2020 International Blues Challenge, cash prizes to defray their costs heading to Memphis and recording time at Music Gardens Studio in New Brighton, PA.



The 1st Place winning Band:

Bobby Thompson and the Groove

~Bobby Thompson and the Groove is a group based out of Beaver County, PA. Members include: Bobby Thompson on Guitar and Vocals, Rich Mannion on Keyboards, James Beswick on Drums and Rob Sinchak on Bass. The band is influenced by a large number of artists including BB King, Albert King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Gary Clark, Jr., Jimi Hendrix, Doyle Bramhall II, Stevie Wonder and ZZ Top.

Guitarist of the Year: Bobby Thompson



The 2nd Place Band: Colorblind Willie

The Colorblind Willie Band includes” Bill “Colorblind” Duff on Guitar and Vocals, Clint Hoover on Chromatic and Diatonic Harmonic, Joe Cunningham on Drums, Chad Sauerwein on Bass. All have Together they possess over 30 years of musical experience. Colorblind Willie was featured in the first original Blues musical, “Heart of Steel” last November.

The 1st Place winning Solo/Duo: The Jill Fulton Duo



Independent crossover recording artist, Jill Fulton is a soulful singer/songwriter whose mother claims she sang before she could talk. Jill Fulton’s fiery vocal skill is all entertainment on stage, where comparisons have been drawn to Annie Lenox, Bonnie Raitt, Joss Stone and Janis Joplin.



The 2nd Place Solo/Duo: Gary Prisby

Gary Prisby has competed twice in the past; once as a solo and once as a duo. Both times he earned wins that took him to the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, TN. Recently, Prisby won first place winner in the 2018 Pittsburgh Acoustic Challenge.

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Great news!
Now available....
"Blues from the Burgh 5"
CD Compilation

The stellar lineup includes: Barbara Blue, Jill West & Blues Attack, Max Schang, Stevee Wellons Band, The Jeff Fetterman Band, The Delta Struts, The Aces, Miss Freddye, Jimmy Adler Band, Hoodoo Drugstore, Lori Russo & the Uppercuts, The Neid's Hotel Band and the Aris Paul Band.

\$10 per copy.

The Blues special...all five CD compilations for \$20.

Don Luisi, RMU Radio "Damn Right I Got the Blues" stated: **I've been looking forward to a new addition to the "Blues from The Burgh" series and Volume 5 doesn't disappoint.** The 13 tracks offer a wide variety of styles and is a great sampling of Pittsburgh area Blues Bands. The addition of Pittsburgh native, Barbara Blue, the "Queen of Beale Street", is an unexpected bonus".

Get your copy at a fest, event or online at:

<https://www.bswpa.org/store>

<https://www.mkt.com/BSWPA/item/cd-blues>



"Blues From The Burgh 5"

A CD Compilation Celebrating The Music Of Western PA

**Produced By: The Blues Society Of Western PA
 By Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro © May 2019**

"Blues In The Burgh 5" is a compilation CD that contains thirteen tracks by thirteen different bands. Although all the tracks are original, some of them are not actually performed by the writer and although some of the bands may not actually reside in Western PA - or anywhere in PA for that matter, they are all indeed member bands of the Western PA Blues Society.

Since this is a compilation CD I want to make sure that I touch on all the tracks and mention all the bands and their members. That said, my comments will have to be brief.

"**Accidental Theft**" (Barbara Blue) is performed by "The Queen of Beale Street" and now "Blues Music Award Winner" Barbara Blue on vocals; Scott Scharrad, Will McFarlane and Dave Smith on guitar; and Buernard "Pretty" Purdie on drums. 6.

With a world-class lineup like that, you gotta know there's some serious rhythm, lead and slide guitar and blues-belting going on. Yeah! There really is.

"Xtra Xtra" (Jill West) is performed by Jill West on vocals; and Blues Attack, who consist of: Greg Kruppa on guitar; Hank Rafetto on bass; Nick Crano on drums; and Steve Binsberger on keyboards. Being a fan of Jill West & Blues Attack for about twenty-five years now, I knew this would be a smoker. Just like Barbara did in the above track, Jill is belting the hell out of the blues on the vocals, Greg's laying down some crazy good blues guitar licks and a non-credited harmonica is absolutely on fire.

"Bad Attitude" (Max Schang) is an all-out rocker by a power trio consisting of Max Schang on guitar; Tim Graziano on bass; and Jim Richley on drums. Make sure you're dancin' shoes are on for this one.

"Bed and A Bottle" (Cheryl Rinovato) is a concert hall quality performance put on by: vocalist Stevee Wellons; guitarist Cheryl Rinovato; keyboardist Steve Binsberger; bassist Jim Spears; and drummer Allen Muckle. I'm only four tracks into the field here but I'm calling this masterfully done ballad one of the front runners for the disc's best track. Steve and Steve nailed the vocals and the organ leads.

"Bottle Full of Blues" (Jeff Fetterman) is a scorching slow blues number by the Jeff Fetterman Group that includes: Jeff on guitar and vocals; John McGuire on drums; Ralph Reitinger III on bass; and Anthony Brown on keyboards. With the guys in that oh so perfect slow blues groove behind him, Jeff takes this one and runs with it. His emotion-filled vocals and stinging blues guitar licks are totally masterful. It's songs like this that I often say are "Song of The Year" worthy. WOW!

There is no question in my mind that when this one comes on you will **"Shake That Thing"** (Dan Bubien) of yours - and if I'm wrong, you should call a doctor. This one features Dan Bubien on slide guitar & vocals; Shawn Mazzei on guitar; Christian Caputo on bass; Mark Pollern on drums & percussion; and Charlie Barath on harmonica. Collectively they are called The Delta Struts and collectively they are absolutely on fire.

"Ordinary Guy" (Bubs McKeg) is performed by the Aces: Bob "Bubs" McKeg on guitar & vocals; Terry Bates on drums; Mike Sweeney on bass; John DeCola on keyboards; Frank Glove on lead guitar; and Charlie Barath on harmonica. This is a well-done medium tempo shuffle that I really would love to hear the original version of. Somehow the mix on this just didn't do the well-performed song justice.

This next track is done by another fabulous **"Lady of The Blues"** (Steve Nestor) - Miss Freddie. Joining this fabulous Blues Music Award nominated vocalist are: Kid Anderson on guitar; Endre Tarezy on bass; June Core on drums; Eric Spaulding on tenor & baritone saxes; John Holblaib on trumpet; and one hell of an unnamed organ player. Since I can use one word, being brief on describing a song has never been easier.... POWERFUL!

"Ease Me Down" (Mike Sweeney) is performed by: Jimmy Adler on guitar and vocals; June Core on drums; Kid Anderson on bass and Jim Pugh on keyboards. When a talented vocalist and guitarist like Jimmy Adler surrounds himself with three Blues Music Award nominees/winners you should expect nothing less than perfection. FYI - by clicking this link you can read my review of Jimmy's 2015 release titled *"Grease Alley"* - which also features these same band mates...<http://www.mary4music.com/CD66.html#CDJimmyAdler1>

"We Walk On" (Mike Sweeney) is performed by Hoodoo Drugstore and they are: Bob "Bubs" McKeg on lead vocals; Robert Peckman on vocals & percussion; Larry Seifers on harmonica; Jim Daugherty on slide guitar; and Mike Sweeney on bass. This is a percussion powered call and response/Gospel style song that was very easy to sit back and get peacefully lost in.

"Mama She Knows" is soulfully performed by Lori Russo & The Uppercuts who are: Lori on vocals; Frank Glove on guitar; Larry Seifers on piano and organ; Mike Sweeney on bass and Bob Breide on percussion. It's a foot tapper, sing-a-long type song that features outstanding harmony vocals.

"Down to Memphis" is an original by The Nied's Hotel Band and they are: John Vento on vocals; Tim Hadley and Jim McCullough on guitar; Russ Oblinger on bass; Ron Beitle on drums; Fred Delu on keyboards; and Ed Jonnet on saxophone. If the term "Memphis Soul" means something to you then you'll know how good this one is.

"You Can't Fix Lonely" is smoking original by The Aris Paul Band who consist of: Aris on guitar and vocals; Johnny Rooster on harmonica; Alexander Peck on drums; and Tyan Masters on bass. Ya know those kinds of songs where the band goes full throttle from start to finish causing the audience to go absolutely nuts? Yeah, this is that song.

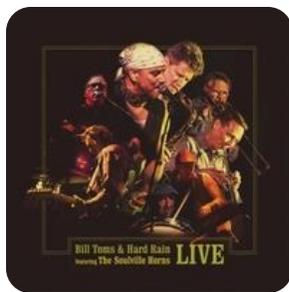
As brief as I may have been, here's a sentence that applies to all thirteen tracks. **Every track was excellent and worthy of airplay.**

To find out more about **"Blues In The Burgh 5"** - and the bands that were a part of it - just go to www.bswpa.org, and if you'd like a copy for airplay just contact Jonnye Weber at <https://www.bswpa.org/store> <https://www.mkt.com/BSWPA/item/cd-blues>
As usual, please tell them that you were referred by The Blewzzman.

Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro
Blues Editor @ www.Mary4Music.com
2011 Keeping the Blues Alive Recipient



Thank you to Jerry Coyne and Jim Hamel for leading the 'charge'. The BSWPA's mission: to give back to those who gave for us. Donations can be made at bswpa.org to provide canteen books to those patients attending the shows to use for toiletry items, etc.



**Bill Toms & Hard Rain - LIVE –
(featuring The Souville Horns)
13 tracks, 79 minutes
Terraplane Records
Produced by Rick Witkowski and Bill Toms**

Bill Toms & Hard Rain LIVE (featuring The Souville Horns) is an excellent follow-up to their 2017 release "Good for My Soul". The CD, recorded at Club Cafe in Pittsburgh on May 5, 2018, captures the energy and vibe of their live shows.

All 13 tracks are well-written original songs by Bill Toms, including two co-written with Steve Binsberger. The lyrics give the songs substance and make you want to listen to the words. Hard Rain; Tom Breiding (guitar, backing vocals), Steve Binsberger (piano, organ), Tom Valentine (bass, backing vocals) and Bernie Herr (drums) provide the groove. The Souville Horns; Phil Brontz (tenor saxophone), Steve Graham (trombone) and George Arner (trumpet) bring it all together and give the songs a deeper sound.

From the first song "Workin'" an excellent choice to open the set, featuring Bill's energetic vocals and some nice horn arrangement, to the closing number, the rockin' "I'm Sad No More", the band and CD sound great.

Some other songs of note include "I Got No Use (For What You're Selling Me)", with Souville Horns providing a cool R&B, Stax sound and also featuring some fine guitar from Tom Breiding. "Your Love Is Good for My Soul" continues the good time vibe and lets Steve Binsberger get a little work-out on the keys. Good Stuff. "Darkest Side Of Town" and "Paying These Dues" are a couple of longer songs that let the band cut loose. "Into the Storm" gives you the feel of strolling down Beale Street.

The CD is filled with well-crafted songs and a band that keeps the groove through-out. If you like the R&B sound of the old Stax and Hi Records recordings, get yourself a copy. Better yet, go see this band and pick up a copy of Bill Toms & Hard Rain LIVE, you won't be disappointed. ~Don Luisi, *Damn Right I Got the Blues*, *RMU Radio* 9.

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This Land
Gary Clark, Jr

This Land by Gary Clark, Jr, is a very ambitious and I was first impressed with how many tracks are on it, eighteen including a hidden track. The album overall is quite diverse, extending into blues, rap, R&B, techno, and rock. It really illustrates the array of talent of Gary Clark, Jr.

Track 1: "This Land" - This song is very reminiscent of urban rap with its lyrics and near techno rhythm. The message is aggressive and strongly worded with the inclusion of racial slurs and four-letter words. This track isn't particularly family friendly.

Track 2: "What About Us" - It takes on a Lenny Kravitz style and carries a great groove. It includes some nice slide guitar work. I would definitely deem this as one of the best tracks on the album.

Track 3: "I Got My Eyes on You (Locked & Loaded)" - Clark slows things down with this track. It starts with drums and keyboard with a vocal line that is R&B influenced. As the song picks up, Clark includes some jazz chords to give the song more flavor.

Track 4: "I Walk Alone" - Clark hits hard with a smooth falsetto that emulates the sound of Prince. He shows a lot of vocal range as he hits high notes with great tone. The tremolo of the guitar gives the song a haunting feel.

Track 5: "Feelin' like a Million" - When this track begins, one can only imagine Bob Marley. The reggae influence is very evident. It carries a great groove.

Track 6: "Gotta Get into Something" - The flavor again changes with a punk rock feel and attitude that emanates from the fast guitar riff and vocals. It's got a fun beat that is sure to get people out on the dance floor.

Track 7: "Got to Get Up" - This song mixes classic blues licks with horn accents. It's nearly just an instrumental with the title as the vocal hook.

Track 8: "Feed the Babies" - Right away the song is reminiscent of the Temptations or a soulful Marvin Gaye with a falsetto vocal that has a bit of a different flair from that in "I Walk Alone."

Track 9: "Pearl Cadillac" - The falsetto of Prince returns in this song. It has a great vibe.

Track 10: "When I'm Gone" -With tremolo and reverb on the guitar, this song sounds like it would be on a soundtrack for the movie *Kill Bill*. But once the song starts moving, it shifts to more of a Motown style.

Track 11: "The Guitar Man" -This song continues the Motown and Marvin Gaye sound and is a proclamation of forever love.

Track 12: "Low Down Rolling Stone" - Probably the grittiest song on the album, it reminds one of what Clark has written in the past and is a welcome sound for those who are familiar with his sound.

Track 13: "The Governor" - Changing to an acoustic guitar, Clark shows his mastery of the instrument with this song. It's a mix of rock and roll and blues, reminiscent of the '50s and Elvis Presley.

Track 14: "Don't Wait Til Tomorrow" -Returning to an R&B sound, Clark is soulful with his vocals on this track.

Track 15: "Dirty Dishes Blues" - Perhaps my favorite track on the album, Clark demonstrates electric blues at its finest, sounding like he's playing through an old tweed amp. Definitely a throwback to the early blues men of the Mississippi Delta. It's stripped down to the bare essentials: a man and his guitar.

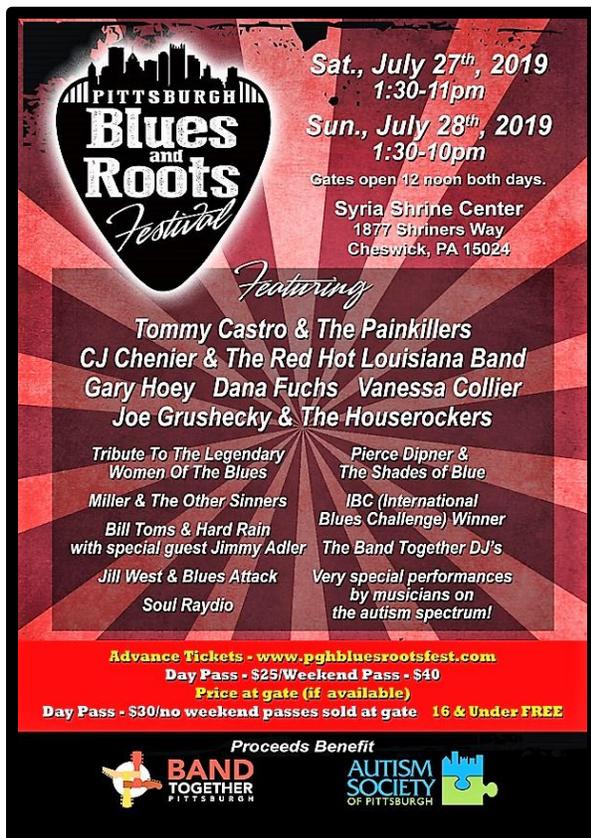
Bonus Track 1: "Highway 71" - This techno beat instrumental utilizes the wah wah pedal during his solos.

Bonus Track 2: "Did Dat" - A jam song that closes out the album. A bit repetitive but it has a good groove. ~Jeff Fetterman

Trivia Corner....Did you know?

Chester Arthur Burnett was a larger-than-life figure from West Point, Mississippi, who became one of the defining pillars of Chicago Blues, scoring numerous hit records of songs composed by legendary songwriter Willie Dixon. What was Burnett's stage name, and which of these songs was not written by Dixon?

- a. "House Rockin' Blues"
- b. "Spoonful"
- c. "Little Red Rooster"
- d. "Back Door Man"
- e. "I Ain't Superstitious"



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The Blues had early roots within Western PA

The following is a historical essay taken from a segment of the **Pittsburgh Music History** publication, giving a **wee** look at the old haunts and players that brought music to our area.

Greats like Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and Ethel Waters appeared in Pittsburgh's theaters in the 1920's. Boogie Woogie was originated in Pittsburgh by Pine Top Smith in the 1920's. Boogie Woogie's first official recording was released in 1928. The first African-

American Dance band, with boogie woogie pianist Earl Hines, also found its roots in the Burgh.

Louisiana Red, a resident of Pittsburgh's Hill District, brought his music to life in the 1940's and was a recording artist at Chess Records. Red had been tutored by Pittsburgh's front porch Blues man, Crit Walters.

Pittsburgh in the 1950s welcomed newcomer, B.B. King to play in Pittsburgh's East End at the Flamingo Roller Rink.

The 1960's brought Johnstown drummer Joey Covington to Pittsburgh who was a founding member of the Blues based band, Hot Tuna. Covington discovered Beaver Falls violinist, John Creach (naming him Papa). Thus, Creach became known as the leading Blues violinist not only on his own but also with Hot Tuna and Jefferson Airplane. Papa John Creach was honored in 1993 for his superb work with a W.C. Handy Award (now referred to a Blues Music Award).

Yes, the roots and many firsts began in Western PA.

Billy Price and Chismo Charles began their careers at the Fox Café in Shadyside and the Decade in the 1970's when a lively Blues/R&B scene was developing in the Burgh. The Mystic Nights used the Decade as their home base featuring Warren King, Bryan Basset and Ron Foster. Chismo Charles and Zack Wiesinger joined that band later. Bon Ton Roulette with Jeff Ingersol and Gil Snyder was another listening treat at the 'late, great' Decade. Nick's Fat City and the Leona Theater hosted the Night Hawks, Billy Price and the Keystone Rhythm Band and the Rhythm Kings. At Swissvale's Fat City, Room Full of Blues, John Lee Hooker, Willie Dixon, Albert Collins, the Nighthawks, the Fabulous Thunderbirds and Albert King added to the 70's Pittsburgh Blues Scene.

Chicago became home to Pittsburgh native, Michael Frank, in 1972 where he became the manager, harmonica accompanist and booking agent for Blues Legend Honeyboy Edwards as well as many others. Frank founded Earwig Music Record Label and Management Company in 1978. Michael Frank was honored in 2008 by the Blues Foundation with the "Keeping the Blues Alive Award in Artist Management. The Blues Blast Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed on Frank in 2011.

Moving ahead to the 1980's, Mancini's in McKees Rocks was the place to be. A few of the many, many names that hit the scene were Buddy Guy, BB King, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, KoKo Taylor, Junior Wells, Son Seal, Bobby Blue Bland and Eddie Shaw. From 1985- 1995, Gene's Baron Saw Mill Run Boulevard hosted Gary Belloma and the Blues Bombers, The Mystic Knights, Glen Pavone and the Cyclones, Barbara Blue, Shari Richards and Cherylann Hawk.

The Blues in the 1990's – 2000's featured Blues rock guitarist/singer, Tony Janflone, Jr., an emerging recording artist and live performer. McKeg Lawson Blues Band, Bubs McKeg and James Lawson, was a favorite during the 1980-1990's. Lawson's death in 1994 took Bubs McKeg solo for a few years. McKeg won three awards from the Blues Society of Western PA and was a top ten finalist at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, TN. He was also a finalist in the International Song Writing Contest that took him to the Helsinki Blues Heritage Festival to share his music.

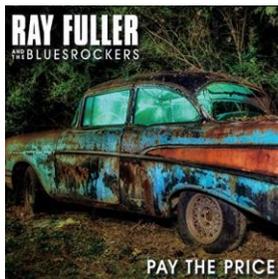
Moondog's, a small club seating 150 people, was brought to life in 1990 by Ron 'Moondog' Esser in Blawnox, PA. Esser has provided a who's who in Blues Artists. Susan Tedeschi, Keb' Mo, Derek Trucks, KoKo Tayler, Luther Allison, Jimmy Vaughn, Tommy Castro, the Nighthawks and many more. Local acts also brought the music in the 90s: Jill West & Blues Attack, Gary Belloma & the Blues Bombers, Glen Pavone, Billy Price...and more. Esser also created Moondog Records to promote and produce the music of Pittsburgh's musicians. In 2005, Ron Esser was recognized with the "Keeping the Blues Alive Award" by the Blues Foundation.

The Blue Note Café was also home to many local and national acts. The Blues oozed from within and was an attraction in the South Side for many years.

Yes, the Blues has always been simmering in the Burgh. It boils over at times. This was an excerpt; just a small window to look into the past. Many more venues and players could have/ should have been mentioned. The mission, however, is to remember what was and aspire to what can be ...lest we forget. _____



Trivia answer: (a) Burnett became a Chicago Blues legend known as Howlin' Wolf. He was a powerful force, a total original whose style has spawned loving imitators like the late Booba Barnes and Tail Dragger, among others. Not too well known are the early recordings he made in Memphis, first with Sam Phillips and then with Joe Bihari of Modern Records and his top talent scout, one Ike Turner. While nothing about the Wolf could ever be called 'polished', these sides are even more raw and stripped down than what he did in Chicago. "House Rockin' Blues" begins with a Boogie Woogie piano (presumably by Turner) and this classic intro: "Good evenin' everybody, the Wolf is comin' in town. You haven't never seen the Wolf." It choogles along with some quintessential Wolf rapping, as he exhorts the band to "blow your top". ~Cary Wilson



**Ray Fuller and the Bluesrockers
"Pay The Price"
Azuretone Records**

So what's a better testimonial than having opened shows for Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Stevie Ray Vaughn, and Buddy Guy? How about Muddy walking onto the stage after Ray Fuller's set and saying "*That was some hot slide boy, I could smell the smoke backstage*" or John Lee Hooker being so blown away by Ray Fullers opening set that he featured Ray as a special guest at his next show? That's testifying at its best right

there. Yeah, in the forty years Ray Fuller has been fronting The Bluesrockers, he's not just been around the block a few times, he's been around the world a few times as well.

"*Pay The Price*", which will be released on May 28, is Ray Fuller and the Bluesrockers eleventh release. Along with Ray, on vocals and guitar, The Bluesrockers are: Tutu Jumper on drums; Doc Malone on harmonica; and Manny Manuel on bass. The album features fourteen tracks of which eight are Ray Fuller originals.

"**All Aboard**".....The "*Hoodoo Train*" is about to leave and this is one trip you don't want to miss 'cause once you ride, you'll never be the same. On this original track, Ray and his engineers take you on a smokin', rhythm-fueled train ride from Memphis, TN all the way to New Orleans, LA. The trip will take you through many cool places, and Ray will provide you with a musical history lesson along the way.

The opening lines on the title track, another original, are so real and so insightful that I've got to share them with you..... 'Life is a gamble, you've got to live by the roll of the dice. You think the odds are even, Mr. you'd better think twice. A good hand is something few men will ever hold and if you cheat the dealer, you've gotta "*Pay The Price*". With Tutu and Manny laying down a strong rhythm behind him, Ray puts on a commanding vocal performance reminiscent of the way Johnny Cash would use that powerful voice of his to grab you and never let go. Oh yeah, this is all going on in the midst of a song long, relentless slide guitar presentation.

Later on, Ray will cover a Chuck Berry song but right here on this original titled "*Pearlene*" you'll certainly hear Chuck's influence. That said, it's kind of needless to tell you that this one's an all-out rocker with smokin' lead guitar licks.

Nothing quite makes a song about a train work better than a profound rhythm and a smokin' harp, and on "*Alabama Train*" (Iverson Minter a.k.a. Louisiana Red), Tutu, Manny, and Doc have that covered quite well. With this train slowly chugging along, Ray's pain is quite evident as he sincerely and emotionally tells of being a long way from home with nobody to love him.

"*Mean And Evil Woman*" is another of Ray's original tracks, and being good old down in the alley slow blues, certainly makes it one of my favorites. Mood inducing, in the pocket rhythm: smokin' harp and blues guitar licks; and gut-wrenching melancholic vocals.....that's what you call the blues.

What's also called the blues is "*Bad Luck And Trouble*" - something that seems to follow bluesmen like Ray Fuller wherever they go. The upside to that downside is ya get to write and sing some great songs and play the hell out a guitar - and on this particular track Ray's laying down some of the disc's best slide guitar work. Real good stuff right here.

To say that Ray Fuller and the Bluesrockers tore it up on "*Tore Up*" (Hank Ballard) would be totally understated. It's barely over two minutes and similar to

calling the Kentucky Derby "the fastest two minutes in sports", this is the fastest two minutes in blues. Turn it up, hold on and just when you think it's time to catch your breath watch out because.....ah, you'll just have to listen and find out for yourself.

~By Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro © May 2019

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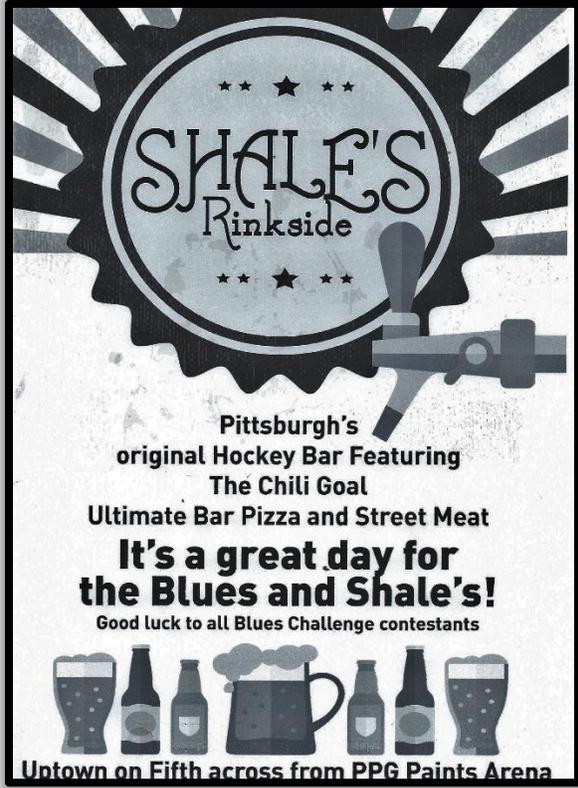
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