



BSWPA BLUESLETTER

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Interview: Bob Margolin...Ever Evolving, Ever Insightful.....	2
CD Review: Soul Doctor, Jimmy Carpenter	4
CD Review: 100 Hundred Years of Blues, Charlie Musselwhite and Elvin Bishop	5
Interview: He Knew from the Beginning. She had what it takes!.....	5
CD Review: Dion, Blues with Friends	8
CD Review: Jimmy Adler, Sweet Memories.....	9
CD Review: Bridget Kelly Band, Dark Space.....	10
Dave Iglar, Guitar-ometer Method	12
CD Review: Curtis and the Shakers, On the Prowl	12
Interview: Kip London...If these walls could talk.....	13
CD Review: Vanessa Collier, Heart on the Line	15
CD Review: Hurricane Ruth, Good Life	15





Bob Margolin...Ever evolving, ever insightful

Long ago, in a tourist haven known as Asheville, North Carolina, my partner informed me that that very night we would be going to a little joint in the downtown area. My excited Blues loving, guitar loving partner promised that I would soon witness musical magic. (Okay, I admit that I was skeptical.) The attraction: Bob Margolin from the Muddy Waters Band. At that point in time, I was not a Blues fan. I had no idea what or who a Bob Margolin was. I went along with the planned program (admittedly sighing heavily) like a lamb to the slaughter. The show was running late. That was and is a big no-no to me (unless it is me who is running late). However, my partner kept saying to be patient. He then pointed to the throng of anxious, equally excited attendees who had that Blues great surrounded. He needed extra time to say hello to them. I later learned that it is a Blues thing where the fans and the players are a family, always saying hello and sharing. As the night unfolded, my attention was riveted to the stage. That was the night that I totally surrendered to Bob Margolin. The man, his mesmerizing music, his amazing stories that gave purpose to his songs ... it was the magical night that had been promised. Yes, I was slayed by what I had witnessed/experienced. (My partner was smug about yet another 'find' to hopefully bring me to the Blues.) Many miles down the road, many years later, many fests, many music cruises, many shows, many hugs, many hellos, Bob remains constant. He is your friend at the first hello. His music never fails to embrace. It surrounds you. It encompasses you. Bob Margolin and his music are the **real deal**.

Bob Margolin known on screen and on stage has much to offer. I personally consider Bob to be an American treasure; past, present and much to offer in the future.

Many, many positive declarations (hard earned, well deserved) have been said about Bob Margolin, from his screen work with Martin Scorsese's *The Last Waltz* to his many recordings. A few of the comments include:

- "It is as authentic and organic as any blues fan could ever desire. I'd give this winning set a 100, but I wouldn't want a talent like Bob Margolin to slack off." -Ken Spooner, *Elmore Magazine* - on *This Guitar and Tonight*
- *When Bob Margolin delivers a new release the blues world sits up, reaches out and takes note.* (Iain Patience/*Elmore Magazine*)
- *After nearly 50 years of playing the Blues, Margolin should be bestowed with the 'icon' title. He's not just a link to many blues artists now gone from this world...but continues to breathe new life into the genre.* (Bill Mitchell/*BluesBytes*)



A new CD (**Star of Stage and Screens**), new musical insights in era of uncharted happenings, it was time to talk with my friend, Bob Margolin, once again. As I have said many times ... when Bob Margolin speaks, I listen.

Jonnye: The events of the last number of months have definitely reshaped music as we know it. What have you learned about this turn of events about yourself and your music? What are you doing to keep yourself 'in the game' and current musically? How has it reshaped your perspective and vision?

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Bob: A musician in the Blues World, the one you and I and Blues societies and Cruisers know, always did “gigs” but now that term is used for the self-employed who work when and where the job is. I never thought there might not be stages and audiences the way a trucker might think roads would not disappear. But one day last March it became unsafe for crowds to gather and hear music close to each other, and for the musicians to socialize with them. Here we are without a clear end in sight. Personally, my first efforts where to “hunker down.” As isolation went on, I began to realize I didn’t know when my next gig would be. Soon after that, I had to face that while I still had my music but no other skills, I would have to find new ways to present the music and try to have an income.

Jonnye: How have you met the challenge of online shows? Are there plans for more in the future? How do you prepare or gauge an unseen audience while live on social media? (It does defy what we know as socially acceptable/desirable as music fans!)

Bob: Fortunately for me and coincidentally, I made an album in mid-2019 that was all-acoustic, much of it solo. It was good, unforeseen preparation for online shows. I also bought a new phone and computer late last year, just because it was time to update those communication tools that help me arrange to play guitar for people. So, I was more ready than I might have been. With a tripod and a new iPhone, I could make high quality videos with excellent sound from a corner of my bedroom with warm, clear acoustics. I did that for Facebook Live, Can’t Stop the Blues, Blues Radio International, and for the Pinetop Perkins Foundation. The first two were tipping situations. That’s weird to me, but I’m grateful to audiences who can’t go to live shows but watch on screens and donate instead. But as time goes on, “Donor Fatigue” sets in. What’s next is still a big question. Stage experience, fifty years of live performances, make it easier to imagine that a few hundred or thousand online watchers will be watching and responding. We don’t interact directly in the moment, and I miss their inspiration, but I have a good idea what they want from me. Onstage or online, I try to be honest, entertaining, choose songs and pace them well, and be friendly and informal.

Jonnye: You are a founding member of the Pinetop Perkins Foundation. You have touched many lives per the wishes of Pinetop. How have you and your team reshaped what you do to still reach out to young players? Discuss the pros and cons to move forward. What is your projected path?

Bob: Like the Blues Foundation or many Blues Societies, The Pinetop Perkins Foundation has tried to make our events for young musicians “virtual.” Over ten years, it’s like a growing family. We went virtual for our summer Workshops, using pre-recorded presentations and mostly Zoom. Our Homecoming, which would have been a real annual event on the Sunday after the King Biscuit Festival, is now planned as virtual for October 24. I hope by the time you read this it will have been a success. We’re all new at this, trying to find our way through modern obstacles. This year for the Homecoming, Blues Radio International — Jesse Finkelstein and Audrey Michele — are helping us produce a professional, powerful, widely-distributed show that will honor Pinetop Perkins’ wish for young people to carry on the Blues music he loved. The virtual events lack the in-person socializing which is so important to building friendships and musical collaborations. but prevailing through hard times is a very Bluesy activity itself. We work separately and together and all of us feel some redemption now.

3.



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Jonnye: How do find your inner peace in turbulent times?

Bob: As much as I love and am used to a lifestyle of travel and performance on no set schedule, I also am fortunate to love the home sweet home. We live in the country and have pets. In the first few weeks of Isolation I said, "I'm living like a billionaire but without the money." But as this dangerous tragedy drags on, I try to appreciate my past and the unexpected opportunity to spend 24/7 with my wife and pets, and both dread and enjoy the challenge of playing alone from home. I recorded a six-song EP to musically express the new reality — hope, bitterness, social and political turmoil, missing audiences and friends in person, new coping skills, ironic humor, and imagining a better future. The EP and title song is "Star of Stage and Screens," released now. The VizzTone Label Group is distributing it. Unable to meet folks at my shows, I'll sell autographed copies from home through my website. I'm learning how to do that this week and I'm making my first video of a song from the EP.

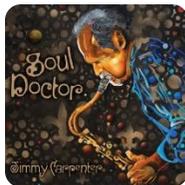
Jonnye: Hindsight as they say is 50/50. Who would you have liked to have been musically quarantined with, past and present, and why?

Bob: I have old and new Blues friends of all ages. In the last few years, I've done duo shows with Bob Corritore and Jimmy Vivino, who were guests on my 2019 album "This Guitar and Tonight." But one day around the Turn of the Millennium, I had Pinetop Perkins, Carey Bell, Hubert Sumlin, and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith as houseguests between gigs. I thought if I had them here all the time, I'd never need to go out. On the front porch, my dogs told me to let Hubert play all the guitar solos. Sure. They are still here in spirit.

Jonnye: What is your advice to players coming up given the times that we have suddenly faced?

Bob: My advice to young musicians used to be "Don't stay home, go out and jam and meet people and join a very friendly Blues scene." Now I say "Watch what I do closely, and you do the opposite." I follow my heart, I'm terrible at business.

*Get yourself a copy of **Star of Stage and Screens**. You will not be disappointed!!!*



Soul Doctor **Jimmy Carpenter**

Again, I am out in the dark on a balcony in the wee small hours of the morning listening to Jimmy Carpenter's 'Soul Doctor'. Besides being the best heartfelt deep, deep soul Blues true Blues album ever with impeccable music, it is also a series of love songs that tell a powerful love story. If I ever wanted a woman to love me, this is the album, word for word, note for note, I would want to create. It is so cool that we Bender Heads (Blues Bender fest) get to hear these amazing artists and their creativity and get to know their souls as people too. ~Patrick Lovetro

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Charlie Musselwhite and Elvin Bishop

I've written liner notes before, but this is my **FIRST EVER** record review: **100 Years of Blues**, is a collaboration by Charlie Musselwhite and Elvin Bishop. Charlie and Elvin are such a natural match, this stellar Kid Andersen production'll make you wonder why it didn't happen sooner.

The record's a stripped down, two-man, deep blues journey with support from only Bob Welsh doubling on piano and guitar, and Kid Andersen on upright bass. There're some new songs, a couple covers and a great selection of reworked originals from each artist's catalog that resonate with such immediacy they could've been written specifically to comfort us in today's troubled times.

Charlie's signature, groundbreaking harp is simultaneously adventurous and traditional, and it melds comfortably into the down-home feel of this album. Elvin's guitar playing is funky, fat and greasy - always groovin' deep in the pocket.

I'm a fan of both Elvin's and Charlie's songwriting. Both are deeply rooted in the blues tradition, but each guys' individual writing voice and personality clearly shines through. I had several "wish I thought of that" moments while listening to this record. Elvin has a gift for making catchy, topical statements in a casual, conversational way - sometimes finding humor in unlikely places, as evidenced here in the updated version of "What in the Hell is Goin' On?" and in the lighthearted, highly relatable (for me), "Old School". Charlie's writing is personal and deep. In "Good Times" he asks the timely question, "where'd all the good times go?". I suspect most of us have been wondering that very thing for a while now, and "Blues for Yesterday" is something I know I've sure been feeling. In his song "Blues, Why Do You Worry Me?" Charlie shares some hard-earned, philosophical wisdom that most of us would do well to pay attention to.

My opinion: 100 Years of Blues should be a no-brainer when the BMAs and the Grammys come back around. It's a landmark album from two, still in their prime, national treasures who built the bridge for a lot of guys like me. ~ Rick Estrin
<https://www.alligator.com/albums/100-Years-Of-Blues/> -----



He knew from the beginning ... SHE had what it takes!!!

The place: Club 152, Memphis, TN. The scene: The International Blues Challenge (IBC).

The time: Long ago but still etched in my mind.

The announcer had just called Miss Freddye and Blue Faze to the stage. She strolled out, a little nervous but eager to perform, eager to share her musical gifts. As a regional Blues Challenge winner with a hard won, much-coveted slot at the International Blues Challenge, it had been a group effort to get **'our'**

Miss Freddy to Memphis. The preparations were many. Rehearsals, wardrobe, rooming, transportation.... Miss Freddy and her band took their task seriously. Their mission: take Memphis by storm, turn heads and hopefully win the IBC.

Our mission as fans was to encourage those many Blues fans that were packed into that venue to take notice and show their pleasure/appreciation for her act. Her biggest fan, late BSWPA Blues president, Jim Weber, was front and center. His never-ending smile told the story. He knew she 'had what it takes'. She had overcome her shyness. His words to her were to let her music wash over the audience. With every note, she was hitting her stride. As 'her' song goes, "Miss Freddy Gonna Fix You". Her voice was a big Blues fix for all who had listened! What a night!! Jim stood there clapping endlessly, stopping everyone to tell them who she was!! Alas, she did not win. However, over the years, her voice has grown richer, her music fiercer. She touches your heart. People have taken notice!

Fast forward to the night in recent years Miss Freddy was an opening act for the Blues Music Awards. Yes, the Blues Music Awards!!!! Walking into the building, my heart was full of joy hearing that amazing voice soar through the convention hall. I did shed a tear when I thought that her fan, Jim Weber, should have been there to see how far she had come. He 'knew'.

Freddy Stover has stayed the course. Her name is now recognized beyond the Western PA borders. She has a new single, Wade in the Water, that is getting worldwide acclaim. Freddy is experiencing many new opportunities as time goes on...all exciting, all amazing, all well-deserved! Amid all the interview requests, Freddy graciously accepted our (the Blues Home Team) request for a chat about what has been and is happening.

Jonnye: What best describes your sound (s)?

Freddy: I would say it is strong, yet a softer side of traditional blues and gospel.

Jonnye: Where do you draw inspiration from?

Freddy: I was inspired by my mentor, "Big" Al Leavitt. He always said to get out there, cause they will want to hear you. I am inspired by my family, my friends, and my fans. When I sing with my bands or other musicians, it is always the "right" chemistry. This inspires me to go on.

Jonnye: Wow! What an honor to be voted Pittsburgh's best Blues Band. Does this put the pressure on you to perform more when you know so many are watching?

Freddy: It is such an honor!! Yes, the pressure is on! I have to be ready to give more, perform more, once the pandemic is over. I am always humbled each time we are awarded. This inspires me to keep performing and believing in the support the fans give! Yes, there is pressure!

Jonnye: One can always find the words of a song that best exemplifies what is going on in their lives or their surroundings. Some have that one go-to song that they find solace or relief with. What is that one song for you?

Freddye: Well, I have several songs...but, that one song would be my original song, "Lady of the of Blues", written by my good friend, Steve Nestor. Steve passed away in December 2017. When I need encouragement, when I need to see what is beyond that troubles me, when I need reassurance, this song lifts me up. It tells of struggles, what I am willing to do to keep my sanity, my strength.

Jonnye: Watching you onstage in Memphis at the International Blues Challenge long ago, you were trying to overcome your shyness and had a hard time facing the audience when you performed. What was the ah-ha moment since that time that has made you feel comfortable on stage and with the audience; that moment that made you feel like you?

Freddye: Well, when I was performing at the Pittsburgh Blues Fest with the WIB. I had to decide that me performing was not about me. I had to imagine I was in the audience, watching me and telling myself "I paid to watch you, so keep me here for an hour!" So, I have to make sure and always remember, "What I do is not mine to keep!".

Jonnye: You now have a single. *Wade on Water*, going strong around the world. I get chills listening to its richness and its depth. Tell us how that came about and why you chose that song. Who put the wheels in motion to 'get er done', who brought it all together the woman and that amazing song? What are your future plans for a follow up?

Freddye: Mike Morgan, from Ohio, produced it, Jay Vernali, did the arrangements, and Kim Parent put the finishing touch with her fantastic backup vocals!! Mike approached me through a promoter who recommended me. Mike wanted to find a blues singer who could put some gospel to an old spiritual. He asked me to find a song that I would like to sing. I chose *Wade in the Water*. I chose this song because of the present-day times of uncertainty. I wanted to sing something that would give hope, let people know there is a way out of our worries. Prayerfully, I will be coming out with a Blues and Roots album and also a Gospel album, both in 2021.

Jonnye: Do you plan to do more National Women of the Blues shows?

Freddye: Once it becomes safe again for me to travel, I will be doing shows with the National WIB.

Jonnye: How has that group inspired, motivated, engaged you?

Freddye: These women reach out, uplift others, and provide guidance to those who are starting out in the world of blues/music. This is so inspiring, that I have introduced other women who are performing blues to some of my friends. This is what it is all about, sharing, providing, engaging, and uplifting with each other.

Jonnye: How do you manage to do all that you do and keep smiling?

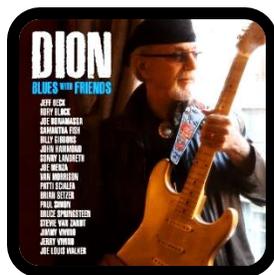
Freddye: HA!! It is definitely not easy! But, I have my faith, I pray every single day. I do a lot of "soul searching" or meditating, started exercising, and have a forgiving heart. I can wake and go through my days "smiling".

Jonnye: Your advice to a young singer looking for direction?

Freddye: Always follow your passion, your drive. Surround yourself with musicians who share the same "chemistry", the same "passion".

Jonnye: Looking back, what one person, past and present, would you like to be in quarantine with musically and why?

Freddye: Well, it would be Koko Taylor. She is my biggest influence on singing the blues. she commanded the stage, had respect for her craft, and she knew what she had to do!



"Blues with Friends"

Dion

Dion DiMucci, "The Wanderer," "King of the New York Streets," Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Famer... call him what you want but he will always be just Dion. Still going strong after over 60 years of performing and recording music through many styles, sounds and changes, he has always begun his journey from a deep foundation in the blues. So what if his blues comes up from the Delta and ends up on the street corners of the Bronx, NY. So what if in his

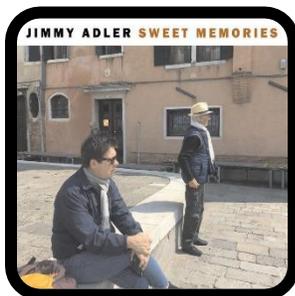
Italian American patois he adds a vowel to the last word of every verse he sings. It's always the twelve bar and it's always the universal stories of the blues. And his latest release, "Blues with Friends" is no exception.

Talk about friends. Each one of these fourteen tracks is a collaboration with some of the biggest names in Rock 'N' Roll and the blues. Each song is unique and reflects the diversity, both musically and emotionally of the performance. You want attitude, listen to "Bam Bang Boom" with guest Billy Gibbons. Feeling sentimental, play "Can't Start Over" with Jeff Beck. Blues Rock? Track one kicks it off with Joe Bonamassa on "Blues Coming On." There's nostalgia and memories with who else, but Paul Simon, on the beautiful "Song For Sam Cooke," and the album appropriately closes with the very spiritual and reflective "Hymn to Him" joined by Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfa. Other friends include Brian Setzer, John Hammond, Sonny Landreth, Van Morrison, Joe Louis Walker and others. And, one other surprise, a new friend on the song, "What If I Told You,"- Samantha Fish.

Great blues, great music! But, don't take my word for it. Just read the liner notes from another old friend, Bob Dylan. "Dion's voice can take you all the way around the world

and then all the way back home to the blues." No doubt about it. Dion, "The Wanderer," will take you back home to the blues wherever that place is for you.

~John Delleara



Sweet Memories Jimmy Adler

Although 2020 hasn't delivered much good news, this year did deliver something for us to enjoy. Jimmy Adler's new album, *Sweet Memories*, is a high point in a year that hasn't been kind to those of us who enjoy attending a live show or festival. This release is somewhat of a departure from Jimmy's previous electric blues from *Grease Alley* (2015) and *Midnight Rooster* (2011) and presents a more folky, honest vibe from this Pittsburgh bluesman. In addition, many of the songs feature Jimmy playing acoustic guitar, a welcome departure from the modern blues trend of hard driving rock guitar.

Although *Sweet Memories* is a different vibe than his previous releases, it is still 100% blues. The collection of songs has everything a blues album should have: road trips, strong women, house parties, back porch vibes, fancy cars, and guitar-slinging bandits.

Jimmy wrote the songs and played the guitars on the album. According to *The Post Gazette's* Scott Mervis, Jimmy started the songwriting process in his kitchen with a lot of ideas that finally materialized into the 11 tracks. The hard work the kitchen paid off, as the lyrics of the songs are outstanding. One exceptional track is *This Old House*, a Dylanesque tune about old memories, lives lived and lives lost. The straightforward acoustic playing on this tune lets the lyrics shine. In a similar lyrical groove is *Stuck in Cincinnati*, about a road trip gone bad, which was inspired by some old family letters. *On the Back Porch* reminisces the good old days and highlights Jimmy's distinctive playing style – which comes through loud and clear on an acoustic guitar.

Jimmy's smooth acoustic slide playing is highlighted in *Masked Marvel*, a great storytelling song about a drinking, gambling guitar slinger in the Delta. For those looking for some great electric riffs, the road trip song *Back to North Carolina* makes one want to jump in the car and head for the beach. Some electric slide shines on *She Got What it Takes* – a bluesy romp about strong women. More sweet memories are highlighted in the blues standard about Guitars, Cars and Movie Stars, filled with more distinctive Jimmy Adler riffs and a homage to Elvis!

As we've all learned this year, the memories that we make with our loved ones are what gets us through the hard times. And Jimmy Adler has captured these Sweet Memories of our lives in this latest release.

Sweet Memories was recorded at Electric Larryland Studios in Indiana, PA. Jimmy Adler and Larry Nath co-produced the recording, and it was engineered and mixed by Larry Nath. The CD was released in August with a limited run of only 100 CDs. Contact Jimmy Adler on www.jimmyadler.com if you're interested in getting a copy. ~ Cyndi Fink



Bridget Kelly Band
"Dark Spaces"
Alpha Sun Records

"Dark Spaces", which the band dedicates to the late and lovable Tony Colter and all those affected by Covid-19, is the sixth release for the Bridget Kelly Band. The disc features nearly seventy minutes of music, on thirteen all original tracks, that cover several styles of

blues that - in their own words - relate to "matters that span from the murky recess of isolation and loneliness, to the summits of hope and unbridled optimism."

For this project, The BKB - as they like to refer to themselves, consists of: Bridget Kelly on vocals; Tim Fik on guitars and bass; Alex Klausner, Sonny Rock and Boss Jones on drums, and Mark Armbrrecht on bass.

The disc opens with "*Free Me*", one of just about every one of the thirteen songs that will validate why Tim Fik repeatedly appeared on my first-round ballots when I was a member of the Blues Music Awards nominating committee for many years. Calling him anything less than genius just doesn't cut it. The song, brilliantly sung by Bridget as well, is about the need to escape the different types of demons and fears that can sometimes encompass and consume us.

The title track, "*Dark Spaces*", addresses those places that most of us have some of but try to keep hidden way back in the corner of our minds. Although there are many who will be afraid to agree, as Bridget sees it, those places not only need to be explored but brought out into the light as well. With Sonny and Mark pounding out a rhythm that lyrics like these call for, Tim is once again working his magic on repeated stinging guitar leads.

"*Find My Way Back Home*" is an up-tempo tune that will surely please the foot tappers, knee slappers and booty shakers. It's highlighted by exuberant and sassy vocals from Bridget; smokin' slide guitar from the maestro; and a substantial rhythm led by Sonny, slammin' the hell out of those skins.

"*Things About To Change*" is a heartwarming, inspirational song in which Bridget not only encourages the thought that bad times will get better, she pretty much promises it, as well. That right there is indeed what Bridget Kelly is truly all about. With the band taking a rare back seat, Bridget shines on this one.

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When I saw the notes on the one sheet referencing this track use the words "epic slow blues" I knew I'd be all over it. I've repeatedly said that when you truly want to hear the caliber of a singer's voice you've got to hear them sing a ballad. That said, you need to hear Bridget on "*Moments*". Now, about those epic slow blues.... just consider that the intense rhythm and the string bending, gut wrenching guitar leads that slap you in the face on the thirty second intro are only a tease.

"*In the Spirit (Souls in The River)*" is another up-tempo number and the somewhat Latin vibe the rhythm sections grooving in will make it another dance floor filler. On another note, the melodically repetitive lyrics and catchy chorus line will have you joining Bridget for a fun filled sing-a-long.

The disc closes with a triple decker blues sandwich called "*Your Days Are Numbered*". It's a seven-and-a-half-minute long track that features Bridget seriously growling out gritty and raspy blues vocals in between not one, not two, but three extended guitar tirades that total close to four minutes long. These are the kind of guitar skills that will one day win Tim that Blues Music Award I mentioned earlier. Remember where you heard it.

Other tracks on "*Dark Spaces*": include: "*Sky's The Limit*"; "*Someone To Hold On To*"; "*Sometimes You Gotta Dance*"; "*No Use In Tryin*"; "*Back Seat Love*"; and "*Southern Wind*". To find out more about the Bridget Kelly Band just go to their website - www.bridgetkellyband.com and if you've not yet received a copy of "*Dark Spaces*" for airplay, please email Marlene from Indienlink Music at marlene@indienink.com. As usual, whomever you talk to, please tell them the Blewzzman sent you. BTW, you might also want to click this link - [Tim Fik - Blues Foundation](#) - and read about Tim Fik receiving the Blues Foundation's "*Keeping The Blues Alive*" Award. ~Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro, Blues Editor www.Mary4Music.com
2011 Keeping the Blues Alive Recipient 11.



Jim Jorewicz
proprietor

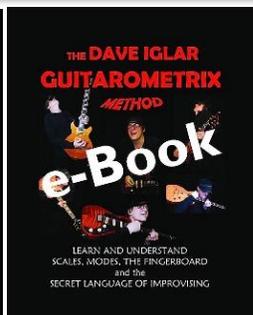
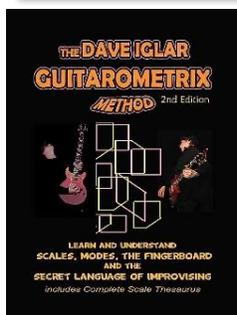
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On the Prowl Curtis and the Shakerz

Curtis and the Shakerz are one of the hot new bands on the Pittsburgh blues scene. Vocalist Curtis Franciscus has put together a talented and experienced band and these guys know how to crank out some tasty blues. Guitarist Kevin McCarthy, Bassist Phil Vento, saxophonist John Voegtly and drummer Bob Fetherlin comprise the Shakerz. Curtis is a vocalist who is a veteran of many area rock bands and his soulful vocals lay down a great foundation

for the crack group of musicians that comprise the Shakerz to weave their sound around. Their debut EP titled “On the Prowl” is a great listen and captures the sound you’ll hear when you attend one of their live shows. Recorded at DaveWorld Studio with noted Pittsburgh musician David Granati handling the production, *On the Prowl* is a great sampling of the kind of classic Pittsburgh Blues with feeling that area music fans are going to love.

The EP kicks off with the mid-tempo number, *Blues Down in My Soul*. Voegtly lays it down on the sax on this one and Curtis’ soulful vocals give this song lots of feeling. The next song, *The Crooner*, starts off with some very cool hand claps that kick off this shuffling blues tune as Kevin McCarthy rips off some tasty guitar. *Standing On the Blue Line* is CATS tribute to law enforcement and first responders and it’s a good one. Whistles and sirens kick the song off along with McCarthy’s guitar lick and the song sizzles with a siren like slide guitar lead as well. A fitting tribute to the bravery of those who serve us all! *Blue Line* has been a hit at CATS live shows. Bob Fetherlin’s drums drive home the rhythm on *The Boogie Train* as the song takes you on a fun ride down to New Orleans. And the final song on the EP is a cover of the classic blues *Rollin’ and*

Tumblin' done Shakerz style with Curtis' vocals drenching it with power and soul. This one has made frequent appearances on the WYEP "Rollin n Tumblin" show hosted by Rob O' Friel whom On the Prowl is dedicated to in the liner notes.

Be sure to check our Curtis and The Shakerz at a venue near you. You're gonna love it!
~Jim Franciscus



If These Walls Could Talk...

Open Doors Pittsburgh recently threw open the doors at **Moondog's**. They beckoned us, the curious, to come in. Once through the door via a zoom rendering, Ron Esser (a.k.a. Moondog) talked about the many greats who have also entered that Blues haven known for its stellar music, its people, its down home feeling. Many lighthearted stories were shared. Many heart felt, many humorous...all had great content that would have made for a great Blues biography of those who have contributed to the musical history that has taken place in Western PA.

As an added treat, Ron introduced his long-time friend, Kip London. Kip had entered the BSWPA's Blues Challenge after moving back to Pittsburgh a few years back. His music was amazing. His stories were just as amazing. Kip then threw open the doors to his music, picking up his guitar and taking us on a musical journey. Kip had made a few comments about the Blues and.... of course, a follow up was in order.

Jonnye: You mentioned that the Blues players were the best.

Kip: Let me clarify. Blues players may or may not be the best. What they do best is that they rely on their feelings and they improvise while playing the Blues. That is an amazing feat. That intensity is what draws you into the music.

Jonnye: Why is the Blues genre not so popular?

Kip: I remember when we had Mancini's and Nick's Fat City. There were lots of Blues at one time. You used to hear a lot of the old Blues. I am more of a purist when it comes to music. Then ... this talented guy, Stevie Ray Vaughn, hit the scene. Suddenly, and meaning no disrespect, we had guitar monsters coming out of the walls with twenty-minute solos. All are talented, but Blues to me is about the song not the solos. Blues was very fashionable for a while. We currently have no superstars now. However, what we do have are many excellent, hardworking, sincere Blues musicians that are working to bring the Blues to all of us. Personally, I grew up with the old guys of Blues. I love the old Blues. It moves me. It is really all about taste. Everyone has their favorite style of Blues.

Jonnye: You mentioned that there are so many talented Blues players and they get no respect. Please explain that comment.

Kip: They get little airplay. Music has evolved. People find little Blues to listen to on the radio, making it an unfamiliar genre for them to embrace. Sometimes it is a matter of not knowing what one likes. Once introduced to the Blues, it sneaks up on you. It has depth. It has meaning. The Blues players are very humble. They, the old timers, had less ego and never expected to get in the big time. They just loved to play the music that flowed through their veins, their souls.

Jonnye: What were your influences?

Kip: My early favorites was Bob Dylan, Hendrix, and the Stones. John Hammond, however, led the way. He opened the door to my discovering Lightning Hopkins, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon and Son House in my teens. Hammond is a master of interpretation. His delivery is amazing. I have been in and out of the Blues all my life. There is so much good music out there It's hard to be defined by one genre. Years ago, I headed to San Francisco on a Trailways bus with two guitars and a knapsack. Michael Bloomfield was living in the area and I used to see him in small clubs all the time. That encounter made me want to trade in my acoustic guitar. I moved back to Pittsburgh after a couple of years and got into various blues roots and roots, rock & roll bands, Big Town Playboy, The Road Hogs and Crazy Aces. After a time, I started playing solo again, pushing my own tunes. I worked quite a bit at the Graffiti. That's where I met Ronnie, "Moondog". I moved to Boston in '89. Found myself caught up in the folk scene for a while but started leaning more to the Jump Blues sound. In fact, I started and fronted a band called Jump City which performed in the Boston area for several years. My main inspiration has always come from the great songwriters. Bob Dylan to Tom Waits, Louis Jordan to Keith Richards.

Jonnye: What music haunts your thoughts with their lyrics and meaning. Do you have a go-to blues song that you find uplifting or brings serenity?

Kip: In terms of the blues, Corry Harris 'lays' me out'. His voice and playing are jaw dropping good. I also turn to songs from the old timers: Willie Dixon, Freddy King, Robert Johnson, Johnny Otis. If I'm down in the dumps, I'll listen to stuff like the Louis Armstrong's version of, "Do You Know What It Means to be from New Orleans?" That Hot Five stuff was amazing music!

Jonnye: Did you like the historical theme that Open Doors Pittsburgh explored at Moondog's?

Kip: It was my first time out in a while due to what is going on. One might say that 'I got a virus called the Blues' (Charles Brown). Seriously, I was excited to join Ron. We have been doing music projects together for quite some time. It was a 'night out' for me. I did like the idea to explore 'our' musical history. Hearing the many anecdotes about the Pittsburgh music scene was very interesting. I am honored that I was a part of the project!

The Blues Society of Western PA thanks its many members for their ongoing support during uncertain times. Until we Blues Together Again ... Be well!

Jonnye: So, do you think that Ron should turn this into a series. There was just not enough time during the zoom show. I think Ron also has a book in the making with all his knowledge. I personally could have sat for hours listening.

Kip: Absolutely! I think that Ron has the real scoop that many would like to hear, need to hear. -----



Critics Showing Love for New Vanessa Collier CD, *'Heart on the Line'*

"If you haven't yet hopped on-board the Vanessa Collier bandwagon, now's the time to do it. This young singer/songwriter/saxophonist is going to be a star. If not for the pandemic, perhaps she'd already be there. The Philadelphia native expands her horizons on this latest CD, *Heart On The Line*. A version of Randy Newman's *"Leave Your Hat On"* is another gem among the 11 cuts, this rendition being funkier than the original, thanks especially to Chavez's wah-wah effects on guitar and Collier's commanding vocals. The funky *"Who's In Power?"* is basically a showcase for Collier to display her immense talents on the sax, followed by the slow, jazzy soulful blues, *"Freshly Squozen"* talking about a mother dealing with her misbehaving child but still loving the little one. I've been waiting for one of the big blues labels to latch on to Vanessa Collier, but on the other hand I'm fine with what we are getting from this star in the making. Each of her four albums are outstanding, and you can't go wrong with any of them. My recommendation would be to pick up all of them. You can thank me later. (October 2020's "Pick Hit" by Blues Bytes)



Good Life Hurricane Ruth

"*Good Life*" is Hurricane Ruth's fifth release - her first on the Showplace label - and it was produced by the late, great Ben Elliott. Of the disc's ten tracks, eight are Ruth LaMaster originals and/or collaborations. The "A-List" musicians backing up Hurricane Ruth's powerhouse vocals include Scott Holt on guitar; Calvin Johnson on bass; Bruce Katz on B3 and keyboards; and Tony Braunagal on drums.

Nobody, and I mean NOBODY, knows how to kick things off better than Hurricane Ruth. Opening with the original *"Like Wildfire"* (R. LaMaster, K. Wright, J. Hutsell) will attest to that. Although the wildfire Ruth's singing about is an emotion that someone apparently instilled in her, this smoker will have you thinking differently. With its fireball vocals; blazing rhythm; and scorching piano and guitar leads; like a relentless wildfire, everyone in the band burning out of control.

With some very inspirational lyrics, Ruth uses this foot tappin', finger snappin', head bobbin' shuffle, to share some very good advice her mother once gave her. According to Norma Jean LaMaster, you should never worry about *"What You Never Had"* 15. (R. LaMaster, T. Hambridge). It seems to have worked, because in spite of never having diamonds; never having gold; never having any money, no Maserati and no caviar, Ruth

Blues Society of Western PA Blues Newsletter... Blues news that you can use

is indeed living a *good life*. With Calvin and Tony nailing the rhythm groove behind them, Scott and Bruce are all over some smoking guitar and B3 highlights. One hell of a track - lyrically, vocally and musically.

As many of the disc's songs do, the title track - "*Good Life*" (R. LaMaster, S. Holt) - was inspired conversations with her mom.... someone Ruth seems to make the listener wish they knew. Knowing how much she truly enjoys rocking it out, this is the kind of song I always request at a Hurricane Ruth show. Certainly, and masterfully diverse, Ruth can knock a ballad out of the box as easily as she can blow the roof off of a joint.

Sadly, many times in life, people put themselves second - and it's usually because being in a relationship that allows nothing else. They may make for good songs, but situations like that flat out suck. In her own words, "*She's Golden*" (R. LaMaster, B. Walker), "*is a song about weathering life's storms and finding yourself, your voice, your way*". These are the types of lyrics you listen to hoping they were just written and not lived....as this one may have very well been. Thankfully, as we all now know, that storm was indeed weathered and Ruth's time is now. Another powerfully performed powerful song.

There is a line in this song where Ruth says, "*I'm a wrecking ball, I'm a hurricane - turn me loose, let me rock this place*". To that I say, '*since when did you need permission, and should we expect it any other way?*' The song is titled "*Black Sheep*" (R. LaMaster, S. Holt) and according to Ruth, it is indeed autobiographical. Musically, think back to the part where I mentioned introductions.... now ya got it. With a raucous rhythm, led by Tony killing the kit, and Scott going toe to toe with Ruth on the guitar and vocals, this one is quintessential Hurricane Ruth.

The disc closes with a beautiful and inspirational song. It's titled "*I've Got Your Back*" (K. Leipziger, A. McCray, I. Kelly), and if you've ever said those words to someone - and meant it - you know what it's about. As I think, and may have actually told here before, every time I hear Ruth sing one of these soulful, emotional and heartfelt songs I want to hear a full album of them. Maybe one day? With Tony, Calvin and Scott laying back in a gentle groove, Ruth and Bruce absolutely shine on what's pretty much a vocal/piano duet. Brilliantly done!

Other excellent songs on "*Good Life*" - what I am sure will be a highly recognized release come next year's various awards ceremonies - include: "*Dirty Blues*" (R. LaMaster, T. Hambridge); "*Torn In Two*" (G. Nicholson); "*Who I Am*" (R. LaMaster, D. James); and "*Late Night Red Wine*" (R. LaMaster, S. Holt).

To find out more about Hurricane Ruth just go to her website - www.hurricaneruth.com, and if you haven't yet received your copy of "*Good Life*" for airplay, please contact Gina Hughes at gina@thegalaxieagency.com ~Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro, Blues Editor @ www.Mary4Music.com, 2011 Keeping the Blues Alive Recipient.