



Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania
www.bscpblues.com

BLUES NEWS

Jul - Sept 2025

THE BLUES SOCIETY OF CENTRAL PA

MISSISSIPPI RAILROAD SHOW



SUNDAY JULY 13, 2025

CHAMPIONS SPORTS BAR 300 2nd Street Highspire, PA 17034

BSCP members

FREE

Non-members

\$20

Bring your
instruments
to jam
with the
Cornlickers

Show

2:00

Doors open

12:00



Memberships and tickets for sale at door of event.

Poster design by Jay McElroy



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From your President	2
In Memoriam	3
Save the Dates	3
MS RR	4 - 10
Fall Show	11
Blues Book Corner	12
In Case You Missed It	13
CD Reviews	14-15
Fall Show Poster	16



BSCP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Kathryn Gregoire

Vice President: Mike Knott

Secretary: Lewis Bechtold

Treasurer: Gary "Rocky" Rothrock

Committee Chairpersons:

Sallie Bengtson – Public Relations

Mike Easton – Archives

Kathryn Gregoire – Membership, Newsletter

Mike Knott – Events

Valerie McCaffrey – Membership

John Rignani – Merchandise

Gary "Rocky" Rothrock – Jam, Finance

Sherman Smith – By Laws

John "JD" Drudul – IT Coordinator

Members-at-Large:

John "JD" Drudul

Erica Lyn Everest

Savannah Graybill

Hannah Sherman

Board Member Emeritus:

Clark "Buster" Grubb

Dorothy "Dot" Grubb

Virginia "Mom" Ivanoff

BLUES NEWS STAFF

Managing Editor: Kathryn Gregoire

Copy Editors: Jackson Fogel, Mike Knott, Betty Knott, Hannah Sherman

Contributing Writers: Hannah Sherman, Jackson Fogel, Hank Imhof, George Bressler, Bobby Gentilo, Dave Groninger, Kathryn Gregoire

Photographers: Ken Zeiders, Erica Everest, Nardo Bernski, Bryan Thomas, Steve N Tina McNaughton, Bob Hobaugh, Mike Heiman, Mike Knott

Printed by Get It Now Print

4790 Derry St, Harrisburg, PA

Designer Ashley Rozema, Graphic Artist

From your President...

"Birthplace of the Blues" is the signature sign that greets visitors when arriving at the Delta Blues capitol, Clarksdale, MS. It is a bold proclamation but one the community has earned and continues to deserve with its extensive and continuing history of extraordinary blues masters born and raised there. The American roots of blues music runs deep in the cotton fields, juke joints and homes of the region.

I was fortunate enough to visit Clarksdale during the 2018 Juke Joint Festival. It is a joy to think about the experiences that I had in this unique community where I got to hear so many incredible musicians for the first (but not the last) time, like Carlos Elliot, Anthony "Big A" Sherrod and Cadillac John Nolden.

My enthusiastic resolution to return every year for the festival faded with the arrival of Covid, and despite my good intentions, I still haven't made it back. I had always appreciated that The Cornlickers had brought us blues music from the Delta regions, but now after seeing them in Clarksdale, my appreciation for them grew. And then with me not being able to return there, I am even more grateful for all that The Cornlickers and BSCP have done to bring the Mississippi music here. It is a highlight of every summer to have The Cornlickers come together from their various homes in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and South Carolina to play for us, backing a bluesman they bring here from Mississippi. We have coined this connective experience as the Mississippi Railroad (MS RR). This event is so essential to our blues society that it is offered free for members.

This year we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Mississippi Railroad. Instead of bringing a musician up from Mississippi we are using this opportunity to honor

The Cornlickers, uniquely talented musicians who have had life-long passions for the blues rooted in Mississippi, by asking them to be the main act. The Cornlickers have been the house band at Red's for numerous festivals over the past two decades and they are deeply accepted and part of the MS blues community. Their impact on our blues society has been profound. Now is the time for them to ride the MS RR on their own.

With that in mind, this newsletter issue is dedicated to The Cornlickers with multiple pages devoted to hearing from The (four) Cornlickers about their Mississippi experiences and from members of the blues society about their connections to the MS RR. Many of you have your stories about Mississippi and The Cornlickers and I hope listening to theirs will encourage you to reflect upon and share your own stories with each other. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this part of BSCP history, you now have a chance to learn about it and deepen your understanding of the Blues Society of Central PA and what it is all about (pages 4-10).

Thank you, everyone, for 20 years of keeping the blues alive on the Mississippi Railroad in Central PA.



Hoppin' on the MS RR,
Kathryn Gregoire
bluesmunga@gmail.com

Mission Statement

The Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation, promotion, support and enjoyment of the truly original American art form, the blues.

In Memoriam

by Jackson Fogel



Rod Carey

07-30-46 / 03-31-25

Rod Carey's long career as a bass guitarist with Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters took him all around the country and Europe. When he joined the group in 1993 for the release of *Still Water*, he helped to make it into the first recording all-instrumental blues group, helping to put the Broadcasters on the map. He continued with them through the next several years, including playing bass on *Blues Guitar Virtuoso Live in Europe*, *Language of the Soul*, *The Colour of Love*, and the award winning *Grateful Heart Blues and Ballads* in 1996. In his time, he played with the likes of Hubert Sumlin, Kenny Neal and Bruce Katz.



Steve Evans

N/A / 04-05-25

Steve Evans was a staple of the Bay Area's blues scene for decades. He toured with Etta James, Brian Auger, Sons of Champlin, Elvin Bishop, Coco Montoya and more, but most know him as Chris Cain's bassist for more than 20 years. He was known to find a bass he liked and stick to it, wearing down the neck finish and keeping the older parts as long as he could to keep the sound as solid as ever.



Joe Louis Walker

12-25-49 / 04-30-25

Born on Christmas, Joe Louis Walker was a true gift to the blues. Joe started playing at age 8 and as a teenager jammed with Buddy Miles, Otis Rush, Muddy Waters, Jimi Hendrix and more. After a brief break-up with the blues, he formed the Bosstalkers in 1985. He took his talents from producer to producer and was featured on many award winning albums, his own work mixing the influences of blues, gospel, jazz, and rock seamlessly in a beautiful combination.



Billy Earheart

02-21-54 / 05-13-25

Billy Earheart was one of the most consistent keyboardists in the business, and a committed one at that - he played on more than 200 albums in his career. As an original member of the Amazing Rhythm Aces, he won the Grammy for Best Country Vocal Performance By A Duo Or Group for "The End Is Not In Sight (The Cowboy Tune)." He was the piano player for Hank Williams Jr.'s Bama Band for more than 20 years, and BSCP members might remember his performance at the 2017 Mississippi Railroad with Mark "Muleman" Massey.



Jeff Anderson

N/A / 06/04/25

Jeff Anderson was a bass player for many years and saw the world while playing the blues from New York to Belgium to Japan. He played and recorded with Charles and Eddie. He toured with Johnny Copeland and Ben E King, was a longtime bassist for Esther Phillips and was in the Apollo Theater house band in the 90s. In 2017, the BSCP had the pleasure to see him back Slam Allen, who he played with on a few albums over the years. Anderson played on the last two albums of Dave Keyes.

SAVE
THE
DATES

Mississippi Railroad – 7/13/25 – 20th Anniversary Featuring The Cornlickers
FREE MEMBERSHIP EVENT

Fall Show – 9/21/25 – The Nick Moss Band Featuring Dennis Gruenling
w/ The Jimmy Adler Band opening

BSCP/SFMS Partnership – 11/02/25 - TBA

Christmas Party – 12/14/25 – TBA FREE MEMBERSHIP EVENT

Please visit our website at <http://www.bscplues.com/news&events.html>
for additional details on each function.

ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE TO THE CORNLICKERS RIDING THE MISSISSIPPI RAILROAD

By Kathryn Gregoire

Birth of the MS RR Blues by George Bressler

"Dale Wise IS the BSCP Mississippi Railroad Program." – George Bressler

Summer 2004. I was parked in the Lochiel Hotel parking lot for the Thursday night blues jam. Another car pulled in. I was absolutely transfixed by the sound coming out of that car. It was the most hypnotic, trance-like rhythm – the likes of which I never could have imagined. It was my very first introduction to the Delta style of blues music, and the Mississippi hill country sound in particular. EVERYTHING left my mind except THAT SOUND. Eventually, I couldn't take it anymore and had to go see what this cat was listening to. I was delighted to see it was my friend Jason Suter-one of my guitar heroes at the Lochiel. He casually said, "It's just the Delta blues," popped the CD out of the player and handed it to me. "Here, take this home and learn it." It was a compilation CD he had made with about a dozen tracks and one word written in magic marker on the disc: "MISSISSIPPI."

Summer 2005. I gained the office of El Presidente at the 2005 Treasurers picnic. Shortly

after the picnic, Dale Wise, drummer for Krypton City Blues Revue/Nate Myers & the Aces, owner of Dale's Drum Shop and widely respected by all, asked to meet with me. I was astounded that he even knew my name. I met him at his drum shop and learned that he and Dave Groninger had been travelling to Clarksdale, Mississippi, meeting and playing with the real-deal, old-school Delta blues musicians. Dale wanted to bring some of them to Pennsylvania to get them some exposure outside the Mississippi Delta, and he wanted the BSCP to be involved. Many of these guys had never even travelled outside their own COUNTY before coming to Central PA.

This, my friends, was the birth of the BSCP Mississippi Railroad that has rolled on ever since. Our first event was orchestrated by Dale Wise, who made all the arrangements (plane tickets, hotel rooms, etc.) for Cadillac John and Bill Abel at the 40 & 8, in late summer 2005. We had no idea what to expect as far as interest or attendance by BSCP numbers - but I do remember advertising it fairly heavily. I also

vividly remember the MASSIVE traffic jam on Chambers Hill Rd. I could write an entire article about that night.

If I could sum all this up in one sentence, it would be this... "Dale Wise IS the BSCP Mississippi Railroad Program." Every year, year-in and year-out, Dale has come through for us with the very finest, authentic talent the Delta has to offer. Last time I checked, Hannah Sherman has been to Clarksdale, MS at least 35 times with The Cornlickers - and it's a thousand miles EACH WAY. And the guys have been many more times than that. Do the math – it only scratches the surface of Dale's commitment to the Delta musicians, who love him as one of their own.

BSCP is honored to present Dale & the Cornlickers as this year's Mississippi Railroad performers. This is as close as you will get to the sound I heard in that parking lot so many years ago, without actually driving to Mississippi. God Bless your beautiful heart, Dale - and 10,000 thank yous from all of us at the BSCP.

Interview with Dale Wise (Drums, Vocals)

By Kathryn Gregoire | Photo by Nardo Bernski

*"To me, this concert will be the most important concert that I have ever played."
– Dale Wise*

KG: The BSCP is very excited about the 20th year anniversary of the Mississippi Railroad and The Cornlickers that you and Dave Groninger initiated in 2005.

Dale Wise: I wanted to invite everyone to come out and to experience the celebration of 20 years of the Mississippi Railroad, 20 years of The Cornlickers and their journeys. They came hand-in-hand. The Mississippi Railroad was the engine that drove our success down there in Mississippi. We were able to cultivate friendships down there because we had gigs in Central PA for Mississippi musicians. Once we got going with Cadillac John and Bill Able, they had good experiences and they told other people.



KG: When I look at the history of the MS RR, Big Jack Johnson was a big part of it.

Dale Wise: He is the reason that I got to MS. I went down there to hang out with him and spend some time with him. That is how I got to know people there. I first saw him because he sometimes played the local scene here at the West Shore. Mitch Ivanoff was the key to everything. I decided that I wanted to play music after not doing it for eight years. I saw him in a club one night and I asked him if he knew anyone that needed a drummer and he said, "Yeah, me". I fell into his blues group. When I look back at it, Mitch was there at every turn. His figure was looming large for me at every crossroad. I owe him the respect of bringing that up. He was a great person and a great bluesman and a great friend to me. I really miss him.

Mitch saw Big Jack Johnson before I did. Mitch was a true blues fan. He told me if I wanted to see real blues that I should go out and see this guy. Afterwards I went home and told my wife, Gale, that I felt somehow I was going to get hooked up with this guy. About six months later, his drummer failed to show up and I was available. My first planned gig with him was down in Mississippi at the Sunflower Blues festival. I just fell in there and I fell in love with the guy.

I went down to visit him at his family reunion and I started to get to know the other people on a different basis, on a friendship basis. That's how I met Bill Able and Cadillac John Nolden. And I said something to Mitch about getting them to the 40 & 8 and we talked to George Bressler who was the president at that time and he said, "Sure, let's do it." That is the first one that we had. At the 40 & 8. Those two. It was wildly successful. The road was so full it was blocked out to the highway. We had good advertising in the paper and there was a lot of curiosity to see what this was about.

KG: Fascinating how different people are tuned in to different kind of music.

Dale Wise: When I first started going down there, after about the third group that played like that I started to think that maybe there is something to this. And that is when the light bulb went off that there is a whole lot to it. It is like developing a taste for a fine wine or some kind of exotic food where you just slowly munch and drink on it until suddenly it is part of you and you can experience it and the nuance of it. I never thought that I would get so deeply involved in it. After going down there for a while I got so that I didn't want to play those regular kind of blues songs anymore, I wanted to do that wild kind of music that I heard down there. It was so different, especially for the drummer. They want the drummer to play. They were like,

come on Man, get in it, go crazy. It attracted me right off the bat. It was really a learning curve for me. I had to really study and work hard just to learn the basics of it.

KG: You were so involved with Red's Juke Joint in Clarksdale.

Dale Wise: As time went on, Red just gave me the keys to the place, more or less. I got to play there during the big time festivals. I got to pick the people that I would play with. He really was the key to the whole thing. Opened the door for me. I look back at it and it was unprecedented. I have posters where The Cornlickers are basically at Red's Juke Joint every night of the festivals. Everyone wanted to play there. Charlie Musselwhite. Johnny Rawls. Everyone. He really doted on me. Always had the band there. It was a wonderful experience. I miss him. I miss him more than any of the musicians. Of course, I miss Big Jack and those guys. I knew Red on a level that most people didn't. I think he saw that in me and appreciated it.

KG: Can you tell me a little bit more about The Cornlickers?

Dale Wise: These guys are so dedicated. Every time I would set up something to go to Mississippi, they would be "Let's go!"

A thousand mile drive one way. Little money. Hard work and all that. They were troupers. They just did it. You really get to know someone after a couple of thousand mile trips.

Dave and I started the MS RR together. I met Dave Groninger through Mitch Ivanoff. He got Dave to start coming out to the Club and jammin' with the band and slowly but surely we saw that we were kindred spirits. The third time I went down there I went down with him. He fell in love with it just like I did. He was thrilled by everything about it. I really miss him, too, he was my kindred spirit. Someone I could really talk to. When we have the Mississippi Railroad, he comes for a week and we spend as much time together as we can.

KG: It has been such a partnership between the Blues Society and The Cornlickers.

Dale Wise: It really has been. I don't know of any other blues society that supported Mississippi as diligently and regularly as you guys did. To have a regular event for 20 years. When I look back at it, Red, the MS RR and Bobby with his ability to record were all key. The Blues Society has been really great with supporting Mississippi style blues. It isn't for everyone. Usually they want to have more uptown, more polished kind of blues. There

never was a complaint from anyone that it was too rough. We got to do it in a Mississippi way, loose and fly by the seat of your pants. That is the way to make it happen.

To me, this concert will be the most important concert that I have ever played. It is the culmination of 20 years of doing what we did and being able to present it because you guys gave us the opportunity. It is great to back someone up and we have a lot of fun with that but to be able to go out there and say, "This is what we learned and this is how we do it." To me, I really appreciate it.

We aren't from Mississippi but we brought as much of it with us as we could. I really hope that people who are interested in what that is about will come out to see us. I know that the people that are fans will be there but I hope that maybe some other curious people will want to be able to see what it is about and get a chance to see it. I know that the performance will be the best performance that we have ever done. Everybody is the best that they have ever been and it all comes together. I am very excited about it. We will be ready to give our absolute best.

DALE WISE: Sonny Award Winner

By Kathryn Gregoire
Reprint – 2018 BLUES NEWS

During the summer, BSCP members come together to celebrate the Mississippi Railroad by listening and dancing to authentic blues music, enjoying each other's company, and sharing food and drink. This year members attending the annual event held July 15 surprised Dale Wise with the Sonny Award. Mike Knott, BSCP Events Coordinator, recognized and thanked Dale for his tireless efforts in promoting BSCP, both here and in Mississippi, giving him an inscribed silver flask and a certificate of appreciation.

Dale started out his career at age 16 as the drum tech for Buddy Rich. He opened his nationally recognized Dale's Drum Shop in Harrisburg in 1982. Dale plays with a local band, The Cornlickers, which also serves as the house band at Big Red's Juke Joint in Clarksdale, MS, where they backed Big Jack Johnson (W.C. Hardy Award Winner) until his death in 2011.

The Cornlickers have recorded with Big Jack Johnson, Terry "Harmonica" Bean, Cadillac John Nolden, Anthony Sherrod, and Carlos Elliot Jr. The Living Blues magazine chose Right on Time with Anthony Sherrod (Big A) and The Cornlickers for Best Blues Albums of 2016. Dale and the band have toured in the United States, South America, and Europe.

See BLUES NEWS Oct-Dec 2018, p. 14 for full Reprint

Interview with Tony Ryder (Bass)

By Kathryn Gregoire | Photo by Nardo Bernski

"The blues really for me is home. It gave me a home for now and the rest of my life. I'm grateful for that." – Tony Ryder

KG: Could you give me a little background on how you got involved with The Cornlickers.

Tony Ryder: I grew up in the Harrisburg area which was a great place for music. I started out at age 14 playing popular Rhythm & Blues with the Detroit/Cleveland sound and later the Memphis sound. As an adult I got a feel for gospel music while playing in prisons and churches. Unknowingly it was all a pathway.

I met Dale back in the 70s when we both auditioned for a band. We both got in but we both turned it down. I started going over to his basement where we would jam. Then I was with another band and he was working with Buddy Rich. We parted company for all those years and then one night I went to the Rusty Nail, same place where I heard my first live bass music when it was the Driftwood. Krypton City was playing and Mitch introduced the drummer and here it was Dale. We got reacquainted.

Long story short, years later I was between bands, it was Christmas time and it was at the 40 & 8 with the Blues Society out there on Chamber Hill. Dale and I got to talking and he invited me to go to Right Coast Recording studio (Bobby's place) the next day to play with them.

Not long after that he told me how he and Dave were going down to Mississippi and hearing some real blues. Both of them invited me to go and that is how I got started. From there we picked up Bobby. It was great to meet people that felt the same way. The chances of that happening, I wouldn't want to live by that. But it did and we went head on into it. There was no fear there. It was just flat out.

The first time I went down to MS was around '05 or '06. I remember going down and playing at Red's. And Hannah was on that trip. That is where I ran into Hannah. Dale had this Chevy Van that he got to take Big Jack Johnson around. It was modified to store the drums and to sleep. So you are going down the highway loaded with stuff. You can feel every bump in the highway. I'd usually drive the last stretch of the highway before we got into Clarksdale.



Man, we made a lot of trips. The people we got to meet, that we got to play with, the parties that we played at, the gigs. It transformed me. It made The Cornlickers what they are. You know, they are my friends. But more than that, we had this kinship. We went through a lot. I never experienced that with any other bands that I was in. And I was in some really good bands. But nothing like this. I could never put together anything in my mind that would get near this band.

All four of us are from different musical backgrounds. We have had good times and rough times. You know, it is a relationship. It hasn't always been a straight line, ups and downs. I wouldn't want to do that with anybody else but these guys.

KG: You have had such unique experiences with the people that you met in MS, like going to their homes, being at the juke joints. Very few people get invited into that world.

Tony Ryder: It borders on a different experience, really. You get to hear stories that maybe only a handful of people have heard. They are just crazy, funny stories. You get to be a part of that. To me, that is gold. It made it all worthwhile. Just to go to Jack's house and to hang out with him and his wife and his grandkids. It's family stuff. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and I think about it and just drift into those amazing times and the people I met.

Red Paden. Just getting to know him was unbelievable, let alone play at Red's. And all the characters that we played behind and met. When we were there in August, it was brutal. Even walking in the shade, the sun burns right through the building into your head. To think that people had to

work in it from sunup to sundown six days a week. It is just unbelievable. The harshness of the climate itself. The whole MS thing. And yet, out of that came this incredible music. I am thankful to the Central Pennsylvania Blues Society for keeping this thing real. I like some of the English stuff. They have their thing and they interpret it their way, but to hear that (MS) music, and you can still hear it, like with Big A and Kingfish, you can hear this stuff with the younger people, and it is there. The way it should be, for generations to come.

T-Model Ford. We were going to play with him for the first time. We were doing these licks and couldn't get them. T-Model did what they call today a loop where you just keep looping something until you get your point across. He did it in reverse, like a train backing up. He would take it in reverse and then run it forward again. And then we got it. You talk about a direct connection there. It was magical. The next time we came into Red's, there was a bottle of corn liquor in front of Dale's drum kit and it was in an Uncle Les' Mississippi Muscadine 2007 wine bottle from Sunflower Vineyard. It was a really cool looking bottle given to us in gratitude from T-Model Ford. I actually still have that bottle. It was a memento that I hung on to.

L.C. Ulmer. I got to meet him when Red used to cook down at Roger's on Sunday. He came by on more than one occasion. We got to talking and he said, "You know the blues ain't never going to die. It will find a way." And he is right.

Mississippi is a special place. It is a harsh place. It is where our music came from, I am convinced. W.C. Handy – there is a statue of him on Beale Street in Memphis – said at the turn of the century "That (blues) is the weirdest music that I have ever heard." Well, it is different, but it does something to you. The blues really for me is home. It gave me a home for now and the rest of my life. I'm grateful for that.

20 Coaches Long

By Dave Groninger (Guitar) | Photo by Nardo Bernski

"It has been one long joyous blues musical trial by fire experience." - Dave Groninger

Back in 2005 the train left the station for what has been a long and wonderful blues music ride on The BSCP's Mississippi Railroad (MS RR). At the time of its inception, the MS RR and The Cornlickers ran on much the same time line and tracks. The Cornlickers became a reality during 2005. They played at the first ever Juke Joint Festival in Clarksdale, Mississippi during April of 2005. Thanks to the hard work, support and promotion by BSCP, the train got off to a great start.

The first musicians on the BSCP MS RR were Bill Abel and Cadillac John Nolden, who was in his early eighties at that time. Cadillac John and his brothers performed gospel music alongside BB King on live radio broadcasts in the Delta in the 1940's and into the early 1950's. One of his lifelong dreams was to fly. His dream came true when he and Bill traveled by plane to perform at the first Miss RR show at the 40 & 8 Club in Harrisburg, PA. I think it was the first time that Cadillac John was ever outside the Delta region of Mississippi. The Harrisburg Patriot News ran an article promoting the event. An audience of a couple hundred very enthusiastic and kind people showed up, some of whom had never been exposed to Mississippi blues music. To say that John and Bill were well received is understated.



Soon after that word spread through the Clarksdale and Delta region that there was this place called Pennsylvania where there was a large audience who deeply appreciated blues music and treated Mississippi blues artists with respect and reverence. They just plain loved the music! As the years rolled by the MS RR continued to pick up steam. Many artists performed, among them: Lightnin' Malcolm, Terry Harmonica Bean, Big T Williams, David Honeyboy Edwards, Jimmy Duck Holmes, R.L. Boyce, Big George Brock, Anthony Big A Sherrod, Johnny Rawls, Louis Arzo Gearshifter Youngblood, Mark Muleman Massey, and the legendary Big Jack Johnson. The Cornlickers (Dale Wise, Tony Ryder, Bobby Gentilo and I) served as the band for these artists. I feel very fortunate

and vastly blessed to not only be a part of The Cornlickers but also to have performed many times with these artists. It has been one long joyous blues musical trial by fire experience.

Dale toured all over this country and Europe with Big Jack Johnson long before The Cornlickers. Tony was already playing in working soul and R & B bands when I was still a kid and has toured nationally and internationally. Bobby, my guitar co-conspirator, has grown into a solo artist, tours both nationally and internationally, operates a world class recording studio and is a world class producer. So here we are. Twenty years on and the MS RR is still rollin'. Come on out to the show and jump on the train!

Bobby - Magical Travels

By Bobby Gentilo (Guitar) | Photo by Bryan Thomas

"Mississippi has probably changed every facet of my life." - Bobby Gentilo

In the early 2000's Dale Wise brought a diverse group of scoundrels and ne'er-do-wells into my studio, Right Coast Recording, for some blues freakout sessions. We had a blast and it was my first real experience working with the local blues musicians. Sometime after these sessions I was driving back home to Baltimore from Columbia and was listening to Michael Anthony Smith's Sunday night local radio show and a song came on that struck me. I was at the

Maryland line and losing the signal from the radio station so I actually pulled over to listen. I discovered the song was from Dale Wise and Sugar Dave Groninger. And by coincidence, Dale called me shortly after this to see if I wanted to join the two of them in a band. The idea was to have two guitar players and no bass and I was down to give it a go. Of course it took some time to get my blues legs somewhat steady, but I could feel there was a strong musical connection.

The no bass player thing was short-lived once Tony Ryder came into the picture. His strong R&B influence was the



perfect addition to what we were grooving towards. The Cornlickers went from a two piece to a four piece and away we went. Together, we've traveled over 100,000 miles in Dale's van, performed over 1,000 hours in Mississippi juke joints and Hill Country backyard parties, backed up countless blues men and woman and have had the privilege of taking our music internationally. And we aren't done yet, not even close.

Our last tour out of the Country was in France and Switzerland. The lineup was supposed to be Carlos Elliot, Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, R.L. Boyce and the Cornlickers, all Mississippi Railroad alumni. About two months before the tour we realized our brother R.L. Boyce wasn't doing well and we had to make the undesirable decision to not bring him with us. We were in France, about to go onstage to perform a show

that R.L. was supposed to be on, and Carlos asked us to come together, he had to tell us something important. We gathered in a circle and Carlos informed us that our brother, mentor and friend had passed away. We had five minutes to process this information before taking the stage. He was with us that night, R.L. gave us the strength to give the people in that crowd everything we could muster. We were already a family, but after that, we became as close as close gets.

The Mississippi Railroad has played a pivotal role in bringing numerous artists from the Hill Country and Delta blues community to the north for performances and recordings. This initiative, conceived by Dale and Dave, received strong support from the blues society, which deserves significant recognition for its dedication

and effort. Over the past 20 years, the Cornlickers have backed a varied group of artists from the South for this event, and many of these artist have become friends with the blues society community. It's one of my favorite things about this wonderful journey, becoming friends with such soulful humans.

Mississippi has probably changed every facet of my life. It has heavily influenced my style as a music producer, engineer and musician, it taught me to get the bullsh#t out of the process. I give a lot of credit to Dale for knowing that Mississippi held something incredibly special, and I thank Dave and Tony for being crazy enough to share this magical ride. We ain't right, but never claimed to be.

Traveling with the Cornlickers

By Hannah Sherman

"Magic often happened at Red's."
– Hannah Sherman

It is fitting that the 20th anniversary of the Mississippi Railroad coincides with the 20th year since The Cornlickers were created and recorded their album "Missippi" (yes, correct spelling). I was fortunate to be present at Right Coast Recording for that session which started my "job" as the videographer for The Cornlickers. I have since recorded hundreds of hours of performances from Briggs Farm Blue Festival in Nescopek, PA to Clarksdale, MS and many points in-between. Many of us have been privileged to have enjoyed the talent and company of many greats, including Johnnie Billington, T-Model Ford, Robert Belfour, Paul Wine Jones, Pine Top Perkins, Sam Carr, Eddie Shaw, Wesley Junebug Jefferson, David "Honeyboy" Edwards, Jimmy "Duck" Holmes, Jimbo Mathus, plus all of the musicians that The Cornlickers backed on their recordings and so many others. The band also backed many people they didn't record with. It was always a thrill for days in a row - sometimes three different performances in a day and often six days in a row. It's very easy to forget about the rest of the world when you're in the Delta.

I have traveled to Mississippi 35 times and from the beginning I was mesmerized and inspired by the Delta: the scenery, the history, the music, the people and the weather - that deep heat. Actually everything about the Delta seems to be

deep. It seems very familiar and seems to seep into your soul.

I remember The Cornlickers first gig at KClingers in Etters, PA. The band included Dale Wise on drums and vocals, Dave Groninger on guitar with Mark Armstrong of Philadelphia sitting in on guitar. There was no bass for quite a while. While Dale and Dave were running the Sunday night jam at Red's in Clarksdale, a guy sat in on guitar and Dale asked him where he was from. He said, "Pennsylvania" and Dale replied, "I didn't plan that!" That was a meeting of like-minded Pennsylvanians more than one thousand miles from home and that was Mark Armstrong and that led to that first gig in Etters. Magic often happened at Red's.

When we first started going to Red's, the ceiling was lined with thick clear plastic because the roof leaked. And poured. There was a pool table that was also covered with plastic when it rained. There would be so much water on it that fish would have been very happy there. There were as many mosquitos inside as out. Again, Dale Wise with the good ideas. He started having t-shirts made in Harrisburg, they would be folded, bagged, labeled, packed and shipped to Clarksdale, sometimes in the mail but more often in the van with the band and gear. I could fold those shirts in my sleep, as I processed and sold thousands of them. Thanks to everyone who bought a shirt, the roof was fixed. I am extremely grateful to have known Red

as a good friend. We would sometimes go to the "Diner" in Marks, MS, a nearby town, for their soul food buffet. He never failed to give thanks before his meal. I've spent many hours hanging out at Red's during the day with very few others stopping by. We enjoyed many phone conversations over the years and when he was struggling with his health near the end I considered our conversations a success if I could get a chuckle out of him.

I also got to know Big Jack Johnson and his family. I spent a week staying with Mrs. Johnson and had fun with her and the grandchildren. Jack was very special to so many of us from BSCP over the years. One day Jack decided he wanted watermelon. Off we went to the "patch" which ended up being a field back a long gravel road. Another day he hosted a fish fry in the field next to their house. He was dipping the fish in a big commercial-sized bowl. He had big hands to begin with but when they were covered with cornmeal - what a sight!

That first session at Right Coast Recording in 2005 was a real happening and the beginning of many sessions and jams. That session led, of course, to the *Missippi* album and included a whole string of musicians from Central PA. Blues Society members will recognize most of these names: Dale Wise, Phil Davis, Mitch Ivanoff, Pete Netznick, Bobby Gentilo, George Bressler, Dave Groninger, Mark Armstrong, Lee Carroll, Jimmy Jacobs, Jason Suter and Mike Noll.

On another memorable day the Cornlickers were recording with Carlos Elliot from Colombia, South America. Carlos wrote a song, "Katrina", which became the title track. When it was over I said, "That's going to Number One" and, by golly, it did, in Colombia, beating Paul McCartney. They have all since toured internationally.

The Cornlickers and their connection to the Mississippi Delta inspired Dale and Dave to create the Mississippi Railroad which has probably been the only event of its kind in the country. The BSCP has been blessed these last two decades to enjoy performers every year as a benefit of being a member. Many of those performers have been absolutely iconic.

One of the very best memories of these last 20 years and the whole experience was being able to share it with so many enthusiastic blues lovers from BSCP who spent a lot of energy and money supporting the musicians by going directly to the Delta and being indoctrinated into their lives and times. One year there were over 30 of us there - what a party! Shine On!

Dickinson College Comes to Clarksdale

By Mike Heiman | Photos by Mike Heiman

We were in Red's, in October 20 years ago, with Big Jack Johnson, Lighting Malcolm, and Terry "Big T" Williams playing for the locals and 20 lucky Dickinson College students, all arranged by Red Paden himself to introduce these Northern kids to the Delta Blues, when the moonshine competition commenced. I don't recall whose corn-licking shine was voted most quaffable, might have been Red's, Jack's, or T's, but the students were appropriately blown away, not the least as this was for many the first bar they were ever in, let alone a genuine juke joint and not even asked to show their ID.

We were on a semester-long study of the Lower Mississippi watershed and Clarksdale was the highlight of our itinerary. The Dickinson students were well-prepped; each having chosen a Delta Blues musician to talk about with cassette accompaniment in the big vans we drove down to the Delta. For the next five years dozens more followed in their footsteps on this trip. One year Red even turned away an entire bus load of Scandinavian tourists at the door, wishing not to "dilute" the Delta experience, sending them off to Ground Zero, while he arranged for several hot male dancers in town to come over given that our gang was three-quarters women.

During those years we were blessed not only by Jack, but also by Robert Belfour and a dozen other talented Delta musicians who came out whenever Jack was on stage at Red's. With many now gone, the torch has been passed, and our own Cornlickers-festival house band at Red's in the subsequent years--has continued to keep the flame and their memory alive.



Tributes by BSCP Members

Buster Grubb: So many memories...I guess one of the more memorable was our house warming when they played in our driveway with Anthony. Great music, fun for all. Complete with a visit from the cops. I am thankful for all the wonderful people we've met thru the Cornlickers.

Kathleen Zeiders: The first time I went to Clarksdale and to Red's was Juke Joint 3. I took Bob Birdsong's bus tour and met Dot and Mom I for the first time there. At Red's I found it is possible to have 2 inches of rain water on a pool table if a tarp is used. I also learned that our club puts their toilet paper on a table for use by members. The ladies room had a wood floor with some spaces between the wood. That gave a view of the yard and the Sunflower River. There was a sink that routinely fell off the wall and hung there. I later learned to find Ellis (the dancer) who would reattach the sink.

The beer list was limited to the "MAX." You could bring hard stuff and it wasn't hard to find shine. We were regulars at JJF from then on. One year we got to Red's midafternoon before the Cornlickers hit town. We were the only customers. Charles got our beer and we were glad to be back like usual. A well-dressed yuppie couple walked in. The woman was looking around and rolling her eyes. It was obvious Red's was not her idea. They sat right next to us at the bar. She looked at her man and said, "I am going to the powder room. I'll be right back." We struggled to keep straight faces and not fall off our bar stools. Never saw either of them again.

Steve and Bev Zug: We have been listening to the Cornlickers for almost 20 years. We have seen them play at Briggs Farm and different establishments. We went

to Mississippi for the Juke Joint Festival and spent the night with them playing with different artist at RED'S. They have always put on a great show. Love the years with the Band!

Nancy Selby: I'm remembering a time down in Clarksdale after a long night of music at Red's during the festival when we went to church on Sunday. The music inside was awesome and Big Jack was playing mandolin. I felt proud to be included. When the preacher asked the congregation who was visiting that day those of us who were stood up and he came around and asked where we were from. I spoke up proudly and said I'm from Pennsylvania and was invited by the Cornlickers. Too late, the words were spoken but I sat down quickly when I heard Dale and Hannah and a couple other people saying under their breath behind me. "Shush shush shush! You can't say THAT in here."

Mary Mammola: My fondest blues days were spent at Clarksdale, Mississippi, especially when Dale Wise was the drummer for Big Jack Johnson at Big Red's. It was magical! I was totally and still am mesmerized watching Dale perform on the drums.

Thank you Dale and the Cornlickers for those special days!

For more information check out our website BSCPblues.com
– MORE – Mississippi Railroad.



2007-2008 Mississippi Railroad

Photos by Ken Zeiders



Dave, Big Jack Johnson, Tony



Dave, Dale, Big T Williams, Tony,
Vann Durham



Lee Carroll, Terry "Harmonica" Bean,
Bobby, Dave



Mitch Ivanoff & Big Jack



Dave, Big Jack, Dale, Bill Carlisle, Tony



Big George Brock

The Mississippi Railroad
Brought to you by the Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania

From Clarksdale, MS
Cadillac John & Bill Abel
Friday August 26, 2005
40 and 8 Club
9 p.m. to Midnight
\$5.00 Donation Requested
Food Included

Mike Davis
John
Watts

Dave

Blues Society of Central PA

For More Information Contact the BSCP:
WWW.BSCPBLUES.ORG
888-771-BSCP (2727)

CADILLAC JOHN
Bill Abel
Dale

FALL SHOW: THE NICK MOSS BAND

FEATURING DENNIS GRUENLING *(See p. 16)*

By Kathryn Gregoire



Nick Moss (vocalist, guitarist) was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, where he picked up the bass guitar as a teenager and went on to become a classic Chicago electric blues artist,

learning his craft playing with traditional blues masters Buddy Scott and Jimmy Dawkins. He became the lead guitarist with the Legendary Blues Band for two years and toured with Jimmy Rogers for three years. For the past 25 years he has fronted his own band, which has been titled *The Nick Moss Band Featuring Dennis Gruenling* since 2016.

In total, his band has released 13 albums, four nominated for a W.C. Handy Award. *Here I Am* was nominated for a Blues Music Award in 2013 and *Time Ain't Free* was voted by the editors at Guitar World magazine as one of the Top 50 Albums of 2014. At the 40th Blues Music Awards in 2019, Moss was named 'Traditional Blues Male Artist of the Year'. The 2019 *Lucky Guy!*, was chosen as a 'Favorite Blues Album' by AllMusic. In May 2020, *the Nick Moss Band featuring Dennis Gruenling* won two Blues Music Awards for 'Band of the Year' and 'Traditional Blues Album of the Year' for *Lucky Guy!*

Dennis Gruenling (harpist) worked in local blues bands in and around Teaneck, NJ in the early '90s, quickly gaining a reputation as a young rising star on the local blues scene. Today he is considered to be among the most innovative and creative blues harmonica players. His high-energy, full-throttle reed work has earned him comparisons to many of the greats, including the late James Cotton. Gruenling was also inspired by blues harp masters Little Walter and George "Harmonica" Smith and saxophonists Lester Young and Red Prysock. A self-taught player and a natural entertainer with seven solo albums and numerous guest appearances to his credit, Gruenling's giant, fat-toned harp work, raw-boned singing and untamed energy are a perfect foil for Moss' inspired guitar playing and straight-from-the-shoulder blues vocals.

Through the years, Gruenling has shared the stage with many top names in the blues & roots world, such as Pinetop Perkins, Snooky Pryor, Homesick James, Nappy Brown, John Mayall, Little Sammy Davis, A.C. Reed, Mick Taylor, and Jimmy Dawkins, as well as contemporary blues masters, such as Rod Piazza & The Mighty Flyers, Rick Estrin/Little Charlie & The Nightcats, Kim Wilson, Rusty Zinn, Steve Guyger, Greg Piccolo, Mark Hummel, and now — Nick Moss!

Rodrigo Mantovani (bassist), born and raised in Brazil, has had a deep love for American blues and roots music from a very young age. This has led him to being one of the most recognized and requested bass players around the world. He has been a member of some of the first ground breaking Blues bands in Brazil. For his work playing and producing a project in Brazil, his band had two albums released in U.S. One of them was nominated for the 37th Annual Blues Music Awards. This remains an historic event as they were the only non-American artists to ever have been nominated for this award.

Rodrigo first met Nick Moss in 2008 while they were both playing at the same festival in Spain. After that they developed a friendship and worked together on some projects, including playing together with their mutual friend, the late great Lynwood Slim.

Pierce Downer (drummer) grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago. Pierce started on saxophone at an early age but was drawn to the drums in middle school. A seminal moment came at a young age while seeing Muddy Water's son, Mud Morganfield, at a local venue. Early exposure of world class artists and the encouragement of his father helped Pierce's realization that his heart beat to that of traditional Blues!

Just a few short years from his high school graduation, he received the call to join the Nick Moss Band as their new drummer. Since joining forces with Nick, Pierce has had the opportunity to play with many seasoned Blues veterans such as Anson Funderburgh, Billy Flynn, Kirk Fletcher, Kid Ramos, Sax Gordon, Piano Willie O'Shawny and Curtis Salgado. Pierce is greatly influenced by drumming legends, such as Fred Below, Gene Krupa, Earl

Palmer, and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith.

Taylor Streiff (keyboard player), a St. Louis, MO native, began studying piano at a young age but after four years of classical lessons, he quit piano in favor of sports. In high school, he rediscovered his love for music, and began taking lessons from STL jazz pianist Michael Silverman, who gave him a strong foundation in blues, jazz, and other popular music styles. Taylor is heavily influenced by Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Leavell, The Grateful Dead, Steve Winwood, Bruce Hornsby and Keith Jarrett.

In 2008, Taylor moved to Chicago to study at Columbia College Chicago. While at Columbia, he met and performed in multiple settings sharing the stage with artists Ivan Neville, Kevin Eubanks, Charlie Sexton, Paula Cole, and Joan Osborne. Taylor graduated from Columbia in 2013 with a degree in Contemporary, Urban, and Popular Music.

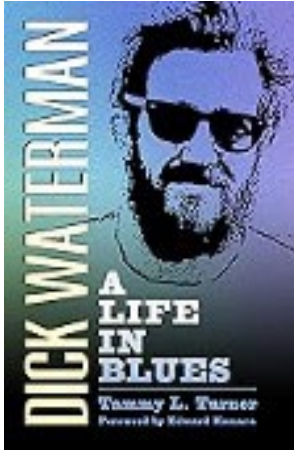
FALL SHOW OPENING ACT: JIMMY ADLER BAND

Jimmy Adler, a dynamic Pittsburgh-based guitarist, vocalist, and bandleader is known for his highly unique yet identifiable sound, a blend of Chicago Blues and West Coast Jazzy Jump. Like many of his generation, the Rolling Stones provided his first introduction to blues music. He was also strongly influenced by the Three Kings: Albert, B.B. and Freddie. Adler has paved the way to his own sound and his own career while maintaining his teaching position at the Pittsburgh School for the Creative and Performing Arts.

As a curator of weekly Blue Monday performances, Adler has supported many of the region's most well-respected musicians showcasing his ability to organize and deliver exciting shows with a variety of guests. A charismatic performer, Adler has thrilled audiences across the U.S. and in France. With charisma and a magnetic stage presence, he plays mostly original songs from his 6 CDs that are steeped in the roots of Americana music. Albums include *Swing It Around* (2008), *Midnight Rooster* (2011), *Grease Alley* (2015), *Sweet Memories* (2020), *Live at Houlihan's* (2023) and *It's Hot!* (2025). For a review by Ken White of *It's Hot!*, please see p. 14.

BLUES BOOK CORNER

By Hank Imhof



The BSCP book club in April discussed a Tammy Turner offering titled Dick Waterman – A Life in Blues (University Press of Mississippi - Copyright 2019).

Our membership had decided on a book about Dick Waterman. Our reading history was almost entirely about the musicians who played the music. Waterman was a manager and promoter of the blues, not a musician. This selection offered a different look into and behind the blues and the music business.

Tammy Turner wasn't a fan or listener of the blues but was lucky enough to take a course in African American music traditions at The University of Mississippi. One of her classes featured a photo display by a guest speaker, Dick Waterman. The pictures that Dick brought to class and discussed were of Bonnie Raitt, Muddy Waters, Mississippi John Hurt, Skip James, Son House, and other musicians that he had managed or worked with, all playing the blues. The seeds for this book were planted, so to speak and years later as Tammy learned more and became a blues aficionado, she saw a need to tell Dick's story. She felt that his deep involvement and care for the music and musicians he loved and managed needed to be written about and documented.

The author starts with a bio of Waterman's early years as a journalist and photographer. A piece of famous blues lore and what would be the start of Dick Waterman's life path was about a fateful journey in the summer of 1964. Three young men, Dick Waterman being one of them, headed south in a Volkswagen Beetle looking for blues legend, Son House. The story was made into a documentary titled "Two Trains Running." If you don't

know the story, read this book or check out the documentary. In my opinion, it's a story everyone who enjoys the blues should know.

The interviews and stories relayed in the book are an interesting look at the behind-the-scenes music business for many of the great artists Dick worked with. The focus was Dick's anecdotal stories of managing Son House, John Hurt, Skip James, and many of the blues revivalist musicians of the 1960s. They are funny, sad, inspiring, tragic, and deeply human, as are the Blues. So many of us have heard all the names that Dick spent many hours and days getting to know personally.

Waterman took on Son House, becoming his manager in 1964. He soon realized there was a need to nurture and "feel the care" of many other black musicians. He founded Avalon Productions to address what he felt was missing in the way artists were treated and/or compensated. Before long Dick was managing many of the rediscovered blues legends. The book then moves through Dick's relationships with those musicians and characters using Dick's own words. Turner also interviewed many for this book that gave interesting, but to be fair, not always glowing, accounts. There were disagreements and disputes. In the introduction, the author explains her desire to share Waterman's life story and to hopefully provide an objective explanation of his disputes.

As Waterman's career progressed, the names changed but the music business remained predatory. Dick went to bat for all his artists, which by then were a new generation of blues musicians. Waterman's career in management had ups and downs that followed the popularity of the music industry and the hot trends that the blues musicians he was working with were affected by. By all accounts he went the extra mile to get musicians fair pay and recompense even after their passing. He spent a lot of time and his own resources fighting battles with the large record companies.

His story includes his years of substance abuse which the author uncovered during

Dick Waterman: A Life in Blues

BY Tammy Turner

her interviews with Dick, his wives, friends, and relatives. In the end it seems Waterman was a positive and good man who fell a few times and reset himself and kept going. Dick was an avid photographer at the start of his working career as a journalist before Avalon Productions. Many of his pictures were stored away and almost forgotten until friends and business associates saw them and suggested he publish them. To his surprise many were to become iconic visual records of many of the musicians he worked with or had the luck to be backstage with. As his work slowed down and he eased into semi-retirement in the 2000s, he never lost his love of or interest in the blues music or musicians that he loved.

For our music selection I played "Walkin' Blues", using a Journey guitar model called Overhead. Many of the artists Dick Waterman worked with had performed this song including Son House, Muddy Waters and Bonnie Raitt. I performed a verse in each style and also did a verse in the style of Skip James. Here are 3 of my favorite verses

[Verse 1]

I woke up this morning, feeling round for my shoes
Know 'bout 'at I got these, old walking blues
Woke up this morning, feeling round for my shoes
But you know 'bout 'at I, got these old walking blues

[Verse 3]

We'll leave this morn' if I have to ride the blind
I've feel mistreated and I don't mind dying
Leaving this morn', I have to ride a blind
Babe, I been mistreated, baby, and I don't mind dying

[Verse 5]

She got an Elgin movement from her head down to her toes
Break in on a dollar most anywhere she goes
My head down to her toes, oh how nice
Lord she break in on a dollar most anywhere she goes

The Blues book club I feel would agree that when we started reading about the history of the blues we had a big skeleton of blues bones. This book as much as any we've read put a lot of meat on those bones.

In Case You Missed It!

Mom I Picnic May 25th

Photos by Steve N Tina McNaughton, Erica Everest, Bob Hobbaugh



Blues Puppy



Erica Everest Band



Rose Hudson Blues Band



Frank Ward
& Virginia Ivanoff



The Mighty Klucks



Acoustic Stew



Lowry Blues Band



Virginia Ivanoff
(Mom I)

Spring Show April 27th

Photo by Kathryn Gregoire

Blue Mondays Lizard Lounge June

16th & 23rd Photo by Kathryn Gregoire



Flatfoot Sam & the Educated Fools



Joanna Connors Band



Gabe Stillman



Johnny Rawls

Iron Bridge Music Festival June 14th

Photos by Erica Everest

Dauphin Co. Parks & Rec

June 20th Photo by Mike Knott



H. Sherman, V. McCaffrey,
M. Rinehart



Chris O'Leary Band



Lowry Blues Band

BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

See more of Jim Whites album reviews at
<https://bluesroadhouse.com>.



Jimmy Adler
It's Hot!

Jimmy Adler has been working his blues guitar magic on the Pittsburgh music scene and beyond for 35 years.

His latest album, *It's Hot* is a smoothly crafted session of a dozen original songs reflecting that lifetime of musical experiences.

While the multi-faceted music here is rooted in the blues, Adler effortlessly blends Latin rhythms, New Orleans flavor, and some soul and gospel into the mix. His versatility on the guitar shines throughout, complemented by a sparkling group of backing musicians. He moves it all along with relaxed, understated vocals that emphasize Adler's smart lyrics.

"Best of Times" opens the album with a funky beat, a stinging guitar solo and an upbeat message that reflects the spirit of the music that follows. Its message is profoundly simple: "The waters may be rough, But you can weather any storm / with courage and commitment, you gotta keep on sailin' on."

"Slow Drag" is a delicious ode to the bliss of slow, very slow, dancing, with just the appropriate hint of bump and grind, and a salacious sax solo by Eric Spaulding, all of which invoke fond memories. "Recipe for Love" invokes Sister Rosetta Tharpe in an easy-swinging ode to the tasty ingredients for romance, with lots of clever wordplay baked in. "Kingston Shuffle" adds a reggae flair, leading into a guitar-driven romp of roadhouse blues in "At the Hideaway," with a shoutout to his hometown of Pittsburgh.

"Higher Ground" adds kickass horns to a hard-driving R&B shuffle, followed by the rocking, fleet-footed "Benny the Booker" — When the cops showed up, Benny was gone... with some barrelhouse piano for good measure. "Fish Fry" cooks with a little down-home blues, and "Lighthouse" is another torchy slow-dancer with sweet backup vocals. "Connie Jones" offers gentle New Orleans rhythms in a picturesque tribute to the seductive charms of the Big Easy: "The sound of the trumpet blows like an evening prayer..."

A lyrical guitar introduces the romantic balladry and Latin flavor in "Savor the Flavor." The rocking title song, "It's Hot," with a fittingly warm Spaulding sax solo, turns up as the closer, bringing it all home with a hot musical flourish.

Of his musical heritage, Adler credits Steve Korpa, a former art teacher, who "became my mentor and go-to person. I sought his

comforting advice. No matter how challenging a day could be, he offered a positive outlook. One of his most memorable phrases stuck with me throughout my 30 years of teaching: 'If you can see it in your mind, you can get it in your life.'

This celebratory collection of songs is connected to the roots of my experiences and infused with the hope and of the Korpa philosophy Once I saw it in my mind, I set out to make it a reality."

His reality here is reflected in this sparkling collection of Jimmy Adler music-making. The combination of Adler's guitar skills, creative lyrics and sizzling backers make for great listening. What happens in Pittsburgh doesn't have to stay in Pittsburgh.

Savor the flavor, indeed.



Johnny Rawls
Make Them Dance
 Catfood Records

Johnny Rawls has been making sweet, sexy soul music for more than 50 years.

After learning to play guitar in his teens. Rawls' schoolteacher in Purvis, Miss., got him gigs backing musicians who were touring the area, such as Z. Z. Hill and Joe Tex. In the mid-1970s, Rawls joined soul great O. V. Wright's band, later became his music director and played with him until Wright's death in 1980. The band then continued as the Ace of Spades Band for another 13 years.

Rawl's career since then has been colored with blues awards from every spectrum: The Blues Music Awards, Blues Blast Awards, Living Blues Awards, and the W. C. Handy Awards have all acknowledged Rawls with multiple awards and nominations, including Soul Blues Album of the Year and Soul Blues Artist of the Year. Living Blues magazine described him as a "soul-blues renaissance man" when he was featured on the cover in 2002. Three of his albums have made the DownBeat Magazine Critics' Choice Best of the Year List.

Rawls is noted on two markers along the Mississippi Blues Trail — one in Hattiesburg, Miss., and another, of all places, at Marker 110 in Rockland, Maine, testifying to the migration of blues from Mississippi to Maine (check out this bit of [blues history here](#)). Rawls' first recorded with other musicians, but his first solo album, *Here We Go* was released in 1996, and since then he's released an album almost every year.

Make Them Dance includes songs written by Rawls, Catfood label head Bob Trenchard, or co-written by the two. The soulful backing band includes Rawls on rhythm guitar, Wil McFarlane — guitar; Bob Trenchard — bass; Steve Potts — drums; Dan Ferguson — keyboards; Andy Roman — sax solos; Mike Middleton — trumpet; Nick Flood — baritone/tenor/alto sax; Frank Otero — trombone; with guests Claton Ivey on keys, Jamie McFarlane on bass, Justin Holder on drums and backing vocals by Kimberly Horton and Trinecia Butler.

The session opens with the bouncy, horn-fed and very danceable groove of "So Cold," followed by "Dreams of You," a romantic slow-dance ballad featuring Rawls' soulful pipes with elegant background singers. The title track steps out with a funky beat and the tempting refrain: "Make them dance all night long." The aching "Move in My Direction" lets Rawls vocal weep at its pleading best.

"Costs Too Much," Rawls' sole solo creation, swings in hard on another strong groove with dance rhythms very much afoot. "Give It To Me," leans on horns and organ for a tough bluesy sound. On "Rip Off the Bandage," Rawls shouts the pain of a broken relationship. The sensual "Say That You Love Me" reaches deep into primeval soul for an answer to its heartache, while "Swimming with the Sharks" throbs with more danceable grooves.

The closer is the autobiographical "The Long Road," a Rawls' career reflection mirrored by gorgeous horn arrangements in the finest soul music tradition.

About this album, Rawls says:

"This new Johnny Rawls album is called *Make Them Dance* and that's what it's going to make you do," he says. "I have some great love ballads on here, too; some of my best work and produced by the great Jim Gaines. One of the tracks on this is the song, 'Move In My Direction,' and that's what you should do: move in the direction that Johnny Rawls is going."

You would do well to pay attention to Johnny Rawls. And his music. He knows whereof he sings!



Carolyn Wonderland
Truth Is
 Alligator Records

The truth is, Carolyn Wonderland is a powerful vocalist, plays electrifying guitar and writes bright, intense lyrics.

And she's brought all those skills together

BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

See more of Jim White's album reviews at
<https://bluesroadhouse.com>.

again for another fine album, the musically eclectic *Truth Is*. Wonderland has been plying her blues trade and recording since 2001 and is just a few years removed from her coveted stint as lead guitarist for British bluesman John Mayall and The Blues Breakers — a spot that has solidified her standing in the upper ranks of blues guitarists, and a spot previously occupied by Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor, Peter Green, Coco Montoya, and Walter Trout.

Wonderland's last album, *Tempting Fate*, won the Austin Music Award for Best Blues Artists and Best Guitarist, and she was inducted into the Austin Music Hall of Fame. She has also been nominated for a Blues Music Award three times.

All of which has led to her second album for blues-centric Alligator Records (her 13th overall), showing off her skills on guitar, slide guitar, mandolin, trumpet and piano. Bassist Naj Conklin and drummer Giovanni Carnuccio join a seeming cast of thousands here for ten original tracks and two covers. The music reflects Wonderland's penchant for exploring music that ranges beyond traditional blues boundaries and also gives her songwriting skills room to roam.

Wonderland explains: "I'm kind of a weirdo. I have kind of a genre-less approach. So, it never would have occurred to me that I would be good enough for Alligator or that I would be their kind of thing. So, I was really excited," she says in [interview on American Blues Scene](#).

The opener, "Sooner or Later," is example of that genre-bending, as Wonderland's lap steel dances to a countrified psychedelia, with her vocals carrying their own down-home twang. Producer Dave Alvin is featured on guitar (he also produced "Tempting Fate"). Marcia Ball and Ruthie Foster lend backup vocals on the following tracks — "I Ain't Going Back Again" and the rocking "Truth Is," explained in the lyric: "Truth is right there in the very air we breathe. So why is it so hard to believe it."

"Let's Play a Game" is a smooth, almost dreamy message: "We've marched to the capitol. We've sang in the holler. Dined with the kings. And lo, Lord, how hard we've tried but peace without justice that's just freedom denied." The bluesy, easy-swinging "Whistlin' Past the Graveyard Again" has a distinctive roadhouse flair with Cindy Cashdollar on lap steel and honky-tonk piano from Red Young, plus some concluding Wonderland whistling. "It Should Take" leans toward a bright New Orleans rhythm.

"Wishful Thinking" is the first cover, from Greg Wood and Eddie Hawkins, a gently flowing ballad, with a universal thought: "I wish that everything that ever fell apart could come back together again exploding backwards into perfection but that's just wishful thinking."

"Orange Juice Blues" by The Band's Richard Manuel is a standout track, a fearsome blues riding Wonderland's guitar and Cindy Cashdollar's lap steel leads, Shelley King's

acoustic guitar, Young's B3, Ball's piano and King on backup harmony. It's a roughhouse gem of a song, mined from all the rest that glitters here.

"Tattoos as His Talisman," with Wonderland's vocals and Alvin's guitar soaring, is a tough ode to an illustrated man. "Flowers In Bloom" coaxes a slow-dance melody and aching vocals from Wonderland, haunted by a relationship. "Deepest Ocean Blue" floats in on Latin rhythms and leads into the closing deep blue passion of "Blues for Gene," a tribute to pianist Gene Taylor, a friend of Wonderland's, who played with the James Harman Band, toured with Canned Heat and The Fabulous Thunderbirds. The song emotionally explains his death during the 2022 power failure amid frigid weather in Texas in 2022. Henri Herbert wraps up his gorgeous piano work here with a raucous boogie-woogie climax. It's a powerful song, lyrically and musically.

Carolyn Wonderland's *Truth Is* more than lives up to its title. It's her musical truth, offered with a splendid rawness and emotion, a passionate exploration of her musical sensibilities and musical skills. Honest. It is.



Taj Mahal & Keb' Mo' *Room On the Porch* Concord Records

Taj Mahal and Keb' Mo' have been sort of a team for a while now, especially since they joined up for the delightful Grammy winning "TajMo" in 2019. They've toured together, been on some blues cruises together, and in general, have bought their bluesy, folksy and rootsy styles together in a celebratory collaboration of great American music.

Now they're at it again with *Room On the Porch*, combining their multi-faceted talents for more of their informal front porch style of original and vintage blues and roots music.

They may be informal, but they're not alone. They're joined on vocals on the sprightly title track by Grammy-nominated Ruby Amanfu, and again by jazz-singer Wendy Moten on "Better Than Ever." And they've made room on their porch for a superb supporting cast: Anton Nesbit (bass), Brian Allen (upright bass), David Rodgers (Hammond organ/synth), Jimmy Nichols (Hammond organ/Wurlitzer), K. Roosevelt (drums/bass), Keio Stroud (drums), Jenee Fleenor (violin), Billy Branch (harmonica), Jeff Coffin (sax), John Oates, Robbie Brooks Moore, Lauren Lucas, Michael B. Hicks, Ron

Poindexter & Gene Miller.

That's a lot to pack into one album, but it's all carried off with a relaxed feeling that makes everything sound musically cool and copasetic. It's a back porch, or in this case, front porch vibe. The vocals, the instrumentation, the arrangements all weave a magical tapestry. Mo' and Mahal trade vocals throughout, sometimes joining together, with Taj's gruffness a gritty counterpoint to Keb's smoothness on six new songs for the session, plus some smartly recrafted oldies.

The title track opens the album (it's always a pleasant surprise when that happens) with a friendly invitation from Taj and Keb' to join this porch party, adding a sparkling vocal contribution by Amanfu: "Come on up there's room on the porch for everyone." Next, "My Darling, My Dear," pairs Mahal and Mo' in a lovely ballad. Then Mo' adds his unique sound to open the chestnut, "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," leading into a call and response with Mahal, enriched by a striking vocal chorus.

"She Keeps Me Movin'" floats in on an easy, rhythmic shuffle, then the vocal back and forth continues on "Make Up Your Mind." Make Up Your Mind," a jaunty, country/folk/pop melody that finds common ground in a cautionary tale with the lyrics "You make no sense, you're going insane/Do you follow your heart or do you follow your brain."

"Thicker Than Mud" is a gentle rocker that emphasizes the importance of family ties even after you're gone: "Blood is thicker than mud." A deep-throated organ intro opens up the more traditional blues of "Junkyard Dog" with Mahal's nasty growling "junkyard dog" refrain. The scorching blues of "Blues'll Give You Back Your Soul," with Mahal on vocals and ukelele, features an unearthly sax solo in unwinding its primal message: "You like your rock and roll but the blues 'll give you back your soul." This track should do just that!

Chicago harp legend Billy Branch adds a sharper edge to the Latin-tinged, "Better Than Ever," with vocal embroidery by Moten, and few concluding verses in French by Mahal with Brach's harp weaving in and out.

The closer finds Mo' and Mahal trading vocals and acoustic licks in the down-home "Rough Time Blues," by Jontavious Willis. The hard-times blues theme is a counterpoint to the general lightness of being that has come before, but its front-porch quality makes it go down easy.

Keb' Mo' and Taj Mahal have opened up their front porch once again with their effervescent *Room on the Porch*, where there's plenty of space for the rest of us to pull up a chair and enjoy.





P. O. Box 60842
Harrisburg, PA 17106

The Blues Society of Central PA Fall Show

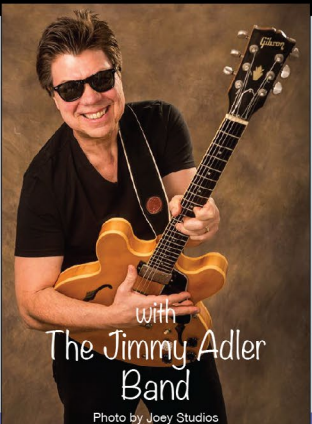
THE NICK MOSS BAND

★ featuring Dennis Gruenling ★



Sunday September 21, 2025

Photo by Sven Erik Hagen



with
The Jimmy Adler
Band

Photo by Joey Studios

★ Advance \$20	★ Doors open 12:00
★ Door \$25	★ Show starts 2:00

★ CHAMPIONS SPORTS BAR 300 2nd Street Highspire, PA 17034 ★

Poster design by Jay McElroy

