



Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania
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BLUES NEWS

July - Sept 2023

THE BLUES SOCIETY OF CENTRAL PA PROUDLY PRESENTS

MISSISSIPPI RAILROAD SHOW WITH MASTER CLASS

FEATURING

★ **R. L. BOYCE** WITH **THE CORNLICKERS** ★

2018 GRAMMY-NOMINEE FOR BEST TRADITIONAL BLUES ALBUM

2023 NEA NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOW

★ **SUNDAY JULY 9, 2023**

FREE MASTER CLASS 12-1:00 PM

DOORS OPEN 1:00 PM

SHOW STARTS AT 2:00 PM

★ **FREE ADMISSION**

FOR BSCP MEMBERS

\$15 FOR NON-MEMBERS

3RD SET IS AN OPEN JAM
WITH R.L. BOYCE, BRING
YOUR INSTRUMENTS



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From your President...

We are halfway through 2023 – our BSCP 25th celebration year – symbolized by silver to show the high value and quality of relationships that have existed for 25 years. Members can be proud to be part of a society that has stayed true to its mission for 25 years of "preservation, promotion, support and enjoyment of the truly original American art form, the blues."

BSCP is fortunate to have members who have wholeheartedly participated in and contributed to the well-being of the blues in Central PA for 25 years. And just as importantly, BSCP has members who joined more recently who bring fresh new ideas, inspiration and energy. The love of blues in Central PA thrives.

The consistent work and dedication of members carrying out the daily tasks ensures the solid base of BSCP. Often this work is done by BSCP Board Members, two of whom recently resigned but leave a legacy of bringing BSCP into the 21st Century in its use of technology, building upon the work of previous board members. Dan Mowery, Web Committee Chairperson, developed a new website, integrated wix.com into it so people can purchase tickets and set up a YouTube channel for BSCP. He has trained other members to manage some of the web tasks and he is generously continuing to serve as the BSCP Webmaster until an appropriate replacement occurs.

Rebecca Young, Public Relations Committee Chairperson, focused on BSCP making use of social media, especially on Facebook homepage and group page. She put numerous hours into creating colorful and engaging posts to inform members and the public about our many events and the weekly jams. Both Dan and Rebecca provided the board with useful analytics to provide information about our website and social media viewers to better serve them. The board will miss their thoughtful contributions, positive

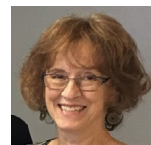
energy and creative ideas.

The BSCP Board welcomes Drew Withum, a guitarist/vocalist in Soup Kitchen and Ruffled Feathers bands and acoustic solo performer who loves our BSCP Thursday blues jam. With a degree in Business/Public Relations, passion for the blues and tons of enthusiasm, Drew is a perfect fit to be our new Public Relations Committee Chairperson.

The recent 25 Anniversary Celebration Mom I Picnic provided BSCP an opportunity to honor volunteers by giving the Sonne Award to three outstanding supporters who have demonstrated exemplary service: Nate Myers, Pete Netznik and Hannah Sherman. Certificates for BSCP Board Member Emeritus were also presented to Virginia "Mom I" Ivanoff, Dorothy "Dot" Grubb and Clark "Buster" Grubb (see pages 9-10).

The extra shine on this silver anniversary comes from some unique features of the organization. The Mississippi Railroad show is an outstanding way that BSCP carries out its mission every summer since 2006. This year we are fortunate to have R.L. Boyce and the Cornlickers with their Mississippi Hill Country blues joining us at Champions on Sunday, July 9 (see page 4).

I am looking forward to the second half of 2023 as we continue celebrating our 25 years of the Blues Society of Central PA.



Lovin' the Blues,

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



Peggy Scott Adams

June 25, 1948 - March 27, 2023

Peggy Scott Adams saw success early and often in her career. As a teenager, she toured with Ben E. King. Soon after, she hit Top 40 in Canada three times in 1968 and 1969 as a duet act with Jo Jo Benson before moving stateside. In 1996, she returned as a singer-songwriter with her solo debut album, *Help Yourself*, which peaked at number 72 on the Billboard 200, number 9 on the R&B chart and number 1 for Top Blues Album. Adams wasn't afraid to tackle intense issues like domestic abuse in her albums and released hit after hit to her waiting fans.



Arthur Lee Williams

July 8, 1937 - April 11, 2023

Williams made his fame as an authentic Delta-style blues harp master. Growing up in Chicago, he took to the blues after listening to records and radio plays from his two musical idols, Sonny Boy Williamson and Little Walter. Arthur's performance with his harp on Frank Frost's album in 1966 won him wide acclaim, and he went on to play with greats like Eddie Taylor, Junior Wells, and Muddy Waters. In addition to the harp, Williams demonstrated his prowess as a harmonica player, especially while recording and touring with Big Bad Smitty.



Billy "The Kid" Emerson

December 21, 1925 - April 25, 2023

Billy "The Kid" Emerson got his famous nickname after his band at the time dressed up as different outlaws, and the name stuck with him as he lived a long life and full career in the blues. He met scout and band leader Ike Turner while stationed in Mississippi during the Korean War, who recruited him into the Kings of Rhythm and produced many of his first singles. As a song writer, Emerson worked with artists like Junior Wells and Buddy Guy, and made his own Tarpon Records label in 1966. In the 70s, he started committing himself to gospel music, and in the 2000s, he was inducted into the Rockabilly Hall of Fame.



Chris Strachwitz

July 1, 1931 - May 5, 2023

Chris Strachwitz first heard swing music on Allied Radio while living in Germany after WWII. After his family moved to the states in 1947, Strachwitz began collecting jazz records, and in college he would book blues artists for school functions. After serving in the U.S. Army, he went to Texas to see his hero, Lightnin' Hopkins. Afterwards, he set up the Arhoolie record label and has been signing and publishing blues musicians since the 60s. In 2000, Strachwitz received the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, the highest award the U.S. gives to a person involved in folk and traditional arts.



Bill "Howl-N-Madd" Perry

August 20, 1947 - May 8, 2023

Billy Joe Perry and his family left Mississippi for Chicago when he was still a kid. By 14 he was playing and recording gospel, and he soon jumped to professional blues with Albertina Walker and Little Milton Campbell as Howl-N-Madd. His impressive career saw him collaborate with Johnnie Taylor, Freddie King, T-Bone Walker and more as he traveled around the U.S. If you asked anyone he worked with, they'd tell you Perry was a true family man, bringing his son and daughter into the Bill Howl-N-Madd Perry band with him.



Otis Grand

February 14, 1950 - June 9, 2023

Otis Grand first picked up a guitar in 1963, learning how to play by slowing down records and letting himself feel the music. One of his first records was B.B. King's *Live at the Regal* and Grand became determined to play guitar like the all-time great. Best known for his 1996 album *Perfume and Grime*, Grand rocked the San Francisco Bay Area before becoming an integral part of the British blues movement in the 80s, where he worked extensively with Joe Louis Walker.

R.L. Boyce: The Sound of Como, Mississippi

By Drew Withum



R.L. Boyce

Northern Mississippi is a place that many call home, but few from the outside understand. “Back when I was coming up you had to earn every living that you made in Mississippi,” recalled Hill Country Blues Legend, R.L. Boyce in a 2018 interview with The Blues Kitchen. Though Boyce has not always worked full-time in music, it is undeniable that his style of Blues is unique to him and where he comes from.

Born in August of 1955, Boyce has since then traveled the world spreading a long tradition of music that was bred in his home county of Como, Mississippi. His love of music began while growing up around legends such as Mississippi Fred McDowell, who Boyce could hear from miles away singing throughout Como. Boyce was also introduced to this one-of-a-kind blues from his cousin, R.L. Burnside.

Beginning in the 60s Boyce joined his uncle, Othar Turner, in the Rising Stars Fife and Drum Band where he remained a member for 30-years playing drums. During his tenure with the Rising Stars Fife and Drum Band, Boyce also had the opportunity to play for Jessie May Hemphill, and can be heard drumming on the 1990 album, *Feelin’ Good*.

It was not until the 80s that Boyce found a new musical voice with the guitar after accepting the challenge of another musician to take up the six-string. It wouldn’t be until 2013 when R.L. released his debut album at 52-years-old, *Ain’t the Man’s Alright*, that solidified Boyce as one of Como County’s greats. In his songs and performances, you can see and hear the experiences of a man that cannot be faked, and why Northern Mississippi’s Hill Country Blues is so revered.

R.L. Boyce is the National Endowment for the Arts 2023 National Heritage Fellow. When they asked him in an interview about his style, Boyce referenced his playing as, “The old way, and nobody today can play my style, just me.”

This is another aspect of Boyce’s music that is apparent. Unlike his fellow Bluesmen who focus on the Chicago Style 12-bars, some of Boyce’s songs feature little to no chord changes but are no less impactful because of it. The songs make listeners feel Boyce’s true self when he sings and plays. As Boyce was quoted, “If the blues is with you...it’s with you,” and there’s no doubt that the blues is within R.L. Boyce.

The Cornlickers (Dale Wise: Drums, Bobby Gentilo: Guitar, Dave Groninger: Guitar, Tony Ryder: Bass) are no strangers to Boyce’s brand of blues. Along with Carlos Elliot, Boyce & The Cornlickers share a history together that is bound to leave a lasting impression on any audience. Hailing from Harrisburg, PA, The Cornlickers spent time in Boyce’s home state of Mississippi as the house band at Big Red’s Juke Joint in Clarksdale, MS, backing Big Jack Johnson until his death in 2011.

It is because of The Cornlickers first bringing the Mississippi Railroad Show to the Blues Society and Central PA in 2004 that the tradition of highlighting these incredible artists has been able to continue.

Boyce’s second album, *Roll and Tumble*, was released in 2017 and echoes with homages to the traditions he grew up around. It was also accompanied by a Grammy Nomination. *Roll and Tumble* was followed up with a live record, 2022’s *Boogie with R.L. Boyce Live*, and brought home a nomination for Best Traditional Blues Album from the Blues Music Awards.

Boyce recently released a song called “Coal Black Mattie” on a compilation album called *Tell Everybody! 21st Century Juke Joint Blues From Easy Eye Sound*, showing there is no slowing down a man who has spent a lifetime living the music of those that changed the blues and made it uniquely their own.

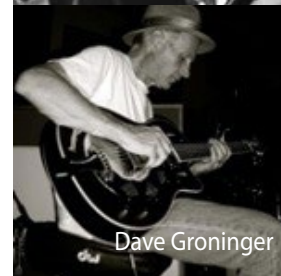
Along with a career of music and sharing stages with the likes of John Lee Hooker and Howlin’ Wolf, R.L. Boyce has also been featured in several documentaries highlighting the

importance of Hill Country Blues and the role Northern Mississippi musicians continue to play in carrying on the traditions. From legendary house parties in Como, Mississippi, to international stages like the Blues Rules Crissier Festival in Switzerland and the Blues Alive concert in the Czech Republic, R.L. has spent a lifetime living and sharing his music. Boyce continues this tradition with an annual gathering in his home county of Como called the “R.L. Boyce Picnic,” and is a three-day event celebrating the culture and music of Hill Country Blues in Northern Mississippi.

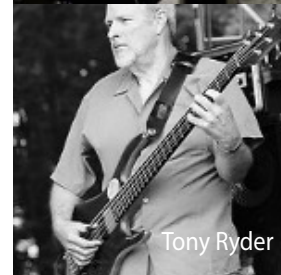
This summer’s Mississippi Railroad (MS RR) show promises to be a one-of-a-kind show with R.L. Boyce performing at Champions Sports Bar with The Cornlickers (Groninger, Ryder and Wise) on Sunday, July 9, at 2 PM. Boyce and The Cornlickers, who have toured internationally together, will also be hosting a free Master Class at noon – 1 PM before an afternoon of Mississippi Hill Country Blues. Musicians are encouraged to bring their instruments and join in for a jam in the third set.



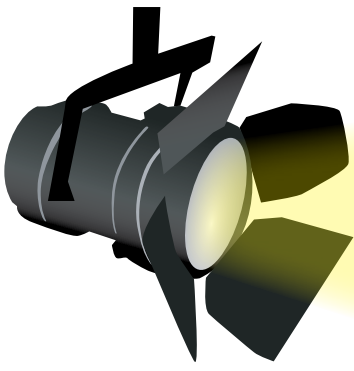
Dale Wise



Dave Groninger



Tony Ryder



In the Spotlight...

Dane Paul Russell



By Hannah Sherman

Photo courtesy of Larry Fogelson

and an amp and his harmonica influences became James Cotton, Paul Butterfield, Sonny Terry and Little Walter.

Between 1973 and 1975, as a troubled youth, he spent two early teen years in a home, got a \$14 guitar from JM Fields and soon traded it for a harmonica and two albums, J. Geils and James Gang. "It was the best trade I ever made." He taught himself to play and we are thankful.

His first band at 16 was Free Flight and he made \$17.50 at his first gig. He thought he was rich. Dealing with the disease of addiction, Dane found no steady bands for the next eight years. In August, 1983, Dane got into recovery and waited three years to start pursuing music again.

Seeing James Cotton in 1986 was a great influence. Several bands followed including Mudcats (rockabilly) and the Bubba's (who opened for big names at the Chameleon including Walter "Wolfman" Washington). The first band he sat in with was the Middleton Brothers at the Metron in Harrisburg. The whole band was extremely welcoming and made him feel very comfortable.

He then played in a band called Dr. Groove (Blues/Funk) The first band he fronted was Human then The Howlers for several years. In 1991 he played two shows at Gullifty's with Bo Diddley promoted by Ed Coffee (Coffee and the Jammer). In 1997 and 1998, he played in the first version of the Dane Paul Russell band and did about 100 gigs.

In 1998 (right about when BSCP was getting going), a guy he knew in D.C. called to tell him Bobby Parker was looking for a harmonica player who could play horn lines. He auditioned and got the gig, putting the Dane Paul Russell band on hold.

Dane also became the MC at Bobby's shows. If you ask him, he will do the intro for you. He played and recorded with him until Parker's death in 2013. They traveled all over and did the Montreal Jazz Fest, Chicago Blues Fest (main stage), Arkansas Blues and Heritage Fest (formerly and currently King Biscuit Fest) and Montreux Jazz and Blues in

Switzerland, among many others.

Dane then joined the Kelly Bell Band who played around 200 shows a year all over including Guantanamo and Dubai. After years seeing beautiful places around the world, it felt empty without his wife of 41 years, Nancy. He started the Dane Paul Russell Band and has been much happier spending more time with his family.

His favorite thing about BSCP is the jam. He started going to the Lochiel in the beginning and, seeing a lot of the world, has never seen a jam like ours. "I've been to a crapload of countries and a crapload of jams, sometimes with well-known people, but our jam is a true jam. You can be a rank amateur or a pro and the host puts players together so it's all inclusive – everyone gets to play."

Most people probably don't know that Dane is a good mechanic and enjoys art. Nancy says, "He puts family first, is a good friend and a genuine, nice person. He keeps things fresh, lively and fun. You never know what to expect." I believe one of the biggest things about Dane is that he has been clean and sober since he was 23 years old, a week after his first daughter was born. His life was miserable and he didn't feel he was a productive member of society. I, for one, am glad he's now happy and healthy!

Mike Eastman: "Dane is a true communicator of Funk and Blues with his vocal expertise. As a harmonica player, there are few that have the chops and tone he has. A complete package. When he steps on stage, either as a sideman or frontman, people can't help to move their feet."

Nate Myers: What can I say? World class harmonica player. Sometimes he sounds like a horn section, sometimes he sounds like Paul Butterfield. He's a chameleon, equally masterful at playing blues, rock and funk. A great band leader, singer and a sensitive side man. The complete package! He's the guy you want to check out!

Drew Withum: Dane is always great to play with and listen to at the jam! He always compliments any set he plays in with his mastery of Blues Harmonica. Dane inspires you to play better!"

While he is well-known as Dane, the first thing that I learned about him is that the legal spelling of Dane Paul Russell's first name is actually DAINE. He started spelling it Dane in 2000 after he played a show called "BET Jazz Central" on a black entertainment TV channel. He waited for months for a tape of the show. It finally came and he saw in the credits that they spelled his first name D I A N E, so he figured it was time to go by DANE.

His early years were spent living up and down the east coast following his Navy dad. When Dane was five, his mom wanted to settle down so in 1965 she chose York, as she was from there and her family was there. His life was tumultuous and he found music gave him a sense of peace.

He won the Top 10 prize of the top 10 records from WSBA, some of which he still has, including "Good Time Charlie," "Got the Blues," "Sweet Home Alabama," "You are Everything and Everything is You" and "I Can See Clearly Now." The first song he fell in love with was Louis Prima's "King of the Swingers" from the movie *Jungle Book*. He was into Blues/Funk/R&B and liked the Isley Brothers, Blood, Sweat and Tears and James Brown. His cousin gave him some old blues albums

Blues Bands Beat

by Jack Roberts



Well, we've got a new band in town - OK, not entirely new, as three of the members have been playing regularly for quite a while at the Thursday Blues Jam at Highspire. But now bassist Phil Kresge has joined the group, and the band has a name: **Lowry**. That's easy to remember, right, as their keyboard and harp player is Tom Lowry, accompanied by Rocky Rothrock on vocals and guitar and Gordy Keeney on drums.

Each of the band members has 50-plus years of experience - which equals more than 200 years of experience if you add it all up - and you might have heard them already at the jam or The Bluebird Inn in Cornwall or the Harrisburg Riverboat Cruise, but next month you'll get a chance to hear them at the Maytown Music in the Park series at Fuhrman Park in Maytown.

Now some exciting news from **Blues on the Loose**. Blues on the Loose will be working with local musician and entrepreneur Kevin Gannon on a couple of projects, starting with Musicians Bedside Manner, a non-profit volunteer group of musicians who perform for convalescent and retirement homes in the greater Lancaster area.

But it doesn't end there. Gannon also is producing a Back Porch Series of musical performances - on his back porch, of course - for broadcast on Channel 66 LCTV (cable). BOTL is scheduling a date in July to do a show on Kevin's Back Porch. The date has yet to be released, so keep track of BOTL on Facebook for more information.

And on it goes. "Gannon has made a deal to use the amphitheater in Lampeter Village Park to host free concerts," Lewis

said, and, he added, "he selected BOTL to open the series." The show is set for Saturday, July 22, 6-8 p.m., and Blues on the Loose will perform two one-hour sets, including a couple songs by blues diva Rose Hudson.

Finally, Bechtold said Blues on the Loose is experimenting with different iterations of the current 6 member lineup. "As many know, the dynamics of gig performing are changing, and we are endeavoring to keep it "Loose," Bechtold said. "So you may find us on a sidewalk 'busking' as a three-piece or bringing all we got to a venue near you." Sounds like a plan.

We got some word from **Shakey Joe Kambic**, famous in the area for singing and playing cigar box guitars. Shakey said he's kicked off a "musical relationship" with his friend Katie Damiano. "My musical relationship with Katie is barely a month old," "Within the last couple of days she hinted at performing as a duo," Shakey said. "When I first met her, she expressed an interest in learning the blues. I told her about Benjamin Vo and Sarah Rogo as blues instructors."

By the time you've read this - assuming you're reading it - they'll have performed together at the corner of Queen and Orange Streets in Lancaster for Music Friday on June 16th from 5:30 to 8:15 p.m. "I'm hoping that the combination proves successful and leads to many more appearances for us," Shakey said. In the meantime, Shakey is working on his latest CD, which, he said, will be called "Shakey Joe Kambic 2." Makes sense to us.

We've got some good news from **The Benjamin Vo Band**. "We got a writeup for our latest album in Blues Blast Magazine back in April. Wanna check it out? That's easy. Just go to www.bluesblastmagazine.com/benjamin-vo-poor-sam-album-review/.

Their latest CD, "Poor Sam," can now be purchased at their shows. Can't wait that long? You can also get it by messaging Benjamin on Facebook or going to the band's Bandcamp page at <https://benjaminvo.bandcamp.com/album/poor-sam>.

We just got from **Johnny Never** that he and John Colgan-Davis will be playing at the Summer Concert Series at the Glen Providence Park in Media on July 15 - or July 16 if it rains on the 15th. For those of you unfamiliar with the park, it's at 500 West State St. The show starts at 5 p.m. and goes until 6:30.

"We've got a few new venues including Letty's Tavern in Kennett Square," he added. Johnny said they're pretty booked up a lot of late, mostly doing block parties and private events. Good for them!

Finally, thanks to **Randy Bucksner** of Mystic Alpacas fame, we've got some good news for blues fans the world over. The East Pete Blues Fest will be back from 1-7 p.m. on September 2nd, featuring no fewer than six acts: The Mystic Alpacas at 1 p.m., The Ben Vo Blues Band at 2, Alex Lew Warner at 3, Muddy Ruckus at 4, The Skyla Burrell Band at 5, and Greg Sover with Kenny Aaronson and David Uosikkinen at 6. What more could you ask for?

As usual the event will take place in the East Petersburg Community Park at State and Pine Streets in East Petersburg, next to the fire station. And there will be food for sale.

Well, that's it for Blues News You Can Use - for now, at least. Be sure to catch up to us in the next newsletter - and keep us posted on where you're playing and when! Meanwhile you can check BSCPblues.com for up-to-date gigs and events listings.

**BLUES SOCIETY OF CENTRAL PA
SPONSORS LISA CHAVOUS
AT THE NEW CUMBERLAND
IRON BRIDGE MUSIC FESTIVAL
JUNE 17, 2023**



Lisa Chavous

In Case You Missed It!

BSCP Spring Show – April 23, 2023
Photos courtesy of Angela Episale



Blues Bizness



Don Zeller



Roy Maddox and Diane Langhorne



Fast Eddie and the Slowpokes



Tam Sullivan



Dancers



Peter Veteska and Blues Train



Audience

Peter Veteska & Blues Train
Photos courtesy of Patti Martz



Peter Veteska



Mike Scott and Chuck Hearne



Alex D'Agnese



Jen Barnes

In Case You Missed It!

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION @ THE MOM I PICNIC - May 28, 2023

Photos courtesy of Larry Fogelson

Thank you to all the musicians, volunteers and members who made this years Fundraiser a great success and a fun time for all!



Blue Elephant



Blues on the Loose



Blues on the Loose



Krypton City Blues Band Revenue



The Humblers



Slaughter House Blues



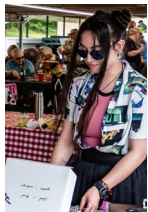
Dane Paul Russell Band



Dane Paul Russell Band



Making Memories



BSCP PRESENTS AWARDS AND CERTIFICATES AT THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

By Kathryn Gregoire

Sonne Awards

The Lochiel Hotel of southern Harrisburg and its (former) owner, Dushan "Sonne" Mudrinich, Jr., hold a special place in the collective memory and heart of BSCP as the birthplace of our blues society and jam. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of BSCP, the Lochiel Hotel "where it all began" is featured on the back of our new BSCP T-shirts.

The hotel building has a long history. In the 1800s the building served as a school for Italian and Hungarian immigrants. It also was at the site of Harrisburg's worst railroad accident in 1905 which killed 23 people. Mudrinich, Jr., who operated it for 40 years, inherited the historical hotel from his father, Dushan Mudrinich, who purchased it in 1927.

In 1998, Sonne welcomed blues players for a weekly Thursday jam and provided a home for the new blues society. BSCP members gave Sonne an award for his support, naming it after him. Over the years, BSCP has given the Sonne Award to Carrie Baker, Bill Carlisle, Bob Emrich, Dot and Buster Grubb, Virginia Ivanoff, Rocky Rothrock, Ray Santana, Eric Wewer and Dale Wise.

Continuing the tradition, BSCP presented Sonne awards at the BSCP 25th Anniversary Mom I Picnic on May 28 to three dedicated supporters: Nate Myers, Pete Netznik and Hannah Sherman.

Nate Myers is the lead singer and harp player for Nate Myers and the Aces, who represented BSCP at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, TN, in the mid-2000s and continues to play regionally, most notably every Tuesday evening at The Grotto in Lemoyne. He also is lead singer for the Nate Myers Trio which recorded on the BSCP *Backyard Blues* album. Myers wrote "Is That What

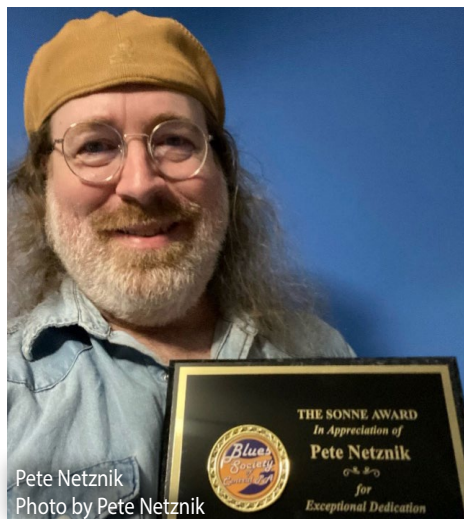


Nate Myers
Photo by Bob Hobaugh

You Want?" and "It's My Music," which drew upon "Catfish Blues" for a medley. The *Backyard Blues* album reached #10 nationally on Roots Music Review for top 50 Blues Albums and Top 50 Contemporary Blues Albums in 2021. Both of Nate's original songs were rated in the Top 50 Songs in PA.

Pete "Cheese" Netznik, also a long-time BSCP supporter, is a singer/songwriter and bassist with Nate Myers and the Aces and guitarist with The Nate Myers Trio. Netznik played with the Trio on the *Backyard Blues* CD and is a regular at the Thursday Night Blues Jam.

Whenever BSCP needs help with fundraisers and memorial services, Myers and Netznik are in the front of the line, helping to organize, promote, and entertain. During the pandemic, they



Pete Netznik
Photo by Pete Netznik

played frequently on the weekly virtual jam show.

Myers and Netznik, along with Scott Stump, Bill Fredrick, and Stephen Hobaugh, put together a Krypton City Blues Revue Tribute Band for the 25th Anniversary celebration at the Mom I Picnic with an amazingly accurate rendition of the band's music from the early days of BSCP.

Hannah Sherman currently serves on the BSCP Board as a Member at Large and on the Events Committee. Drawing upon her work experiences with office and restaurant management and catering and her blues society volunteer work buying, storing, food prep (for days) and cooking in the kitchens, and serving food and cleaning-up with Dot and Mom I, she currently manages the food at picnics and the annual Christmas party where extensive buffets are served. When meals are not a part of an event, Sherman can be found at the front door selling and collecting tickets.

Always eager to learn more about the blues, Sherman is an active participant in the monthly BSCP Blues Book Club meetings and a copyreader and writer for the BSCP newsletter "Blues News." As an ordained priest, members often call on her to conduct house blessings, child welcoming ceremonies, weddings and memorial services.



Kathryn Gregoire and Hannah Sherman
Photo by Larry Fogelson

BSCP PRESENTS AWARDS AND CERTIFICATES AT THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION Continued

By Kathryn Gregoire

Sherman has made approximately 35 trips to Clarksdale, MS, plus numerous blues festivals throughout the East Coast and South. Originally Dale Wise of the Cornlickers made up t-shirts and Hannah sold them for Red's Juke Joint to raise money to repair the badly-leaking roof. She has since sold literally hundreds of t-shirts and other band merchandise for Red's and Clarksdale related musicians Big Jack Johnson, Terry "Harmonica" Bean, "Cadillac John" Nolden, R.L. Boyce, Anthony "Big A" Sherrod, Carlos Elliot, and The Cornlickers. Her service to and relationships with community residents helped build the strong connection that Central PA has today with the birthplace of the (Delta) blues .

Board Member Emeritus Certificates

BSCP also presented Board Members Emeritus certificates to three dedicated former board members who have been crucial to the development of the society throughout the years, recognizing their extensive contributions: Dorothy "Dot" Grubb, Clark "Buster" Grubb and Virginia "Mom I" Ivanoff.

Dorothy "Dot" Grubb played a major role in bringing about and maintaining financial stability for the organization as treasurer for several years and then as a Member at Large, retiring at the end of 2022. A skilled fundraiser, she has no trouble asking for financial support for her beloved blues society and continues to pass the "Tip" jar around at the weekly jam, making it possible for the musicians to have an exceptional backline of well-maintained equipment.

Resourceful, organized and creative, Dot loves to throw a good party and is known for her ability to feed large groups with a limited budget. Often referred to as



Dot Grubb, Hannah Sherman, Kathryn Gregoire, Buster Grubb Photo by Bob Hobaugh

the Blues Society's own Martha Stewart, Dot's (and Buster's) lovingly decorated home and garden have been generously opened to BSCP for board meetings and parties, always with an abundance of good home-made food. Much of the cooking and food preparation goes on in her kitchen before it arrives at BSCP events.

For many people, **Clark "Buster" Grubb** is the face of BSCP sitting at the Membership Table at the Thursday Night Blues Jams, greeting and saying good-bye to everyone throughout the night, making all feel welcomed and valued. While socializing and signing up members, Buster keeps an eye on everything and everyone, making sure all is ok, quick to help if it isn't. The leadership role comes naturally to him, having served as President and Vice-President of BSCP and chairperson of the Membership and Archives committees, retiring at the end of 2022. The Grubb's home is a treasure trove of BSCP paperwork and photographs from throughout the years and blues music and memorabilia leaves no question that blues lovers reside there.

Much beloved **Virginia Ivanoff** is known by many simply as "Mom." Mitch Ivanoff, the charismatic and ultra-talented lead singer for the popular Krypton City Blues Revue, was her son and her mothering took in his many fans, and ultimately, the blues society members. To

make sure all of her "children" were well-fed, she took charge of the food shopping, preparation, cooking, and serving at events for many years. After serving on the BSCP Board as a Member at Large for several years, she retired in 2018. BSCP honored her by naming the annual fundraiser picnic (formerly Treasurer's Picnic) after her: "Mom I Picnic", a fitting tribute to a woman who brought so much joy and comfort to the blues community over the past 25 years.



Mike Easton and Virginia Ivanoff Photo by Bob Hobaugh

Save the Dates

By Mike Knott

Mississippi Railroad - Sunday July 9
R.L. Boyce w/ the Cornlickers

Fall Show – Sunday October 1
Dave Keyes Band w/very special guest
Benny Turner, Switch Fu

Christmas Party – Sunday December 3
TBA

Please visit our website @ <http://www.bscpb Blues.com/news&events.html> for updates.

IT Corner: AI and ChatGPT

By John "JD" Drudul

The buzz around Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT is growing exponentially. What is this technology, you ask? GPT (Generative Pretrained Transformer) is the interface for OpenAI (Artificial Intelligence). OpenAI is an AI research and deployment company.

Wikipedia explains it as follows: ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence chatbot developed by OpenAI and released in November 2022. It is built on top of OpenAI's GPT-3.5 and GPT-4 families of large language models and has been fine-tuned using both supervised and reinforcement learning techniques.

ChatGPT was first released to the public in November 2022. As of January 2023 it has grown to over 100 million users. It is the most quickly adopted tech software ever made. OpenAI runs on Microsoft's Azure system infrastructure and is powered by Nvidia's GPUs.

The ChatGPT interface can be used to ask detailed questions on virtually any topic. ChatGPT remembers previous questions and discussions and can build up on them, unlike a basic Google or Yahoo search. ChatGPT can be viewed as a subject matter expert on virtually any topic.

Some uses for ChatGPT are proof reading text, composing emails, writing code, summarizing a book, creating Excel formulas, composing music, creating images and graphics, and much more. The OpenAI language model and neural network contains information and data relevant up to 2021 at this time, so current events may not be covered accurately.

ChatGPT can be accessed at the OpenAI website at <https://chat.openai.com>. Create a free account and start your research and discussion with the chatbot. Microsoft is now revamping its Bing search engine to use ChatGPT and many other companies are trying unique ways to use the OpenAI API in their business applications. Google has just come out with Bard for their ChatGPT interface.

ChatGPT is all about the prompts. Accurate and thorough prompts will produce more favorable results.

Here are some examples of my ChatGPT prompts and discussion regarding music and blues.

Example 1

Me: Can you write a jazzy chord progression?

ChatGPT: Certainly! Here's a jazzy chord progression in the key of C:

```
Cmaj7 | E7alt | Am7 | Dm7 G7 |
Cmaj7 | E7alt | Am7 | Dm7 G7 |
Fmaj7 | D7alt | G7 | G#dim7 |
Cmaj7 | Em7b5 A7b9 | Dm7 G7 | Cmaj7 ||
```

This progression incorporates some common jazz chords and features a mixture of major, dominant, and minor seventh chords. Feel free to add melodic lines or improvisations over this chord progression to enhance the jazzy feel. Have fun exploring the world of jazz!

Me: Can you add a chorus progression to this example?

ChatGPT: Certainly! Here's an extended chord progression with a chorus section added to the previous jazzy chord progression:

```
Verse:
Cmaj7 | E7alt | Am7 | Dm7 G7 |
Cmaj7 | E7alt | Am7 | Dm7 G7 |
Fmaj7 | D7alt | G7 | G#dim7 |
Cmaj7 | Em7b5 A7b9 | Dm7 G7 | Cmaj7 ||
```

Chorus:

```
Fm7 | Bb7 | Ebmaj7 | Abmaj7 |
Dm7 | G7 | Cmaj7 | C#dim7 |
Fm7 | Bb7 | Ebmaj7 | Abmaj7 |
Dm7 | G7 | Cmaj7 | C#dim7 ||
```

In this progression, the chorus section introduces a different chord progression that adds variation and contrast to the song. The chorus begins with a minor chord and transitions to a series of major chords before resolving back to the verse progression. Feel free to modify and adapt this progression to fit your musical preferences. Enjoy playing with it!

Me: Can you write some lyrics to go with this progression?

ChatGPT: Certainly! Here are some lyrics to go along with the jazzy chord progression:

Verse 1:

Walking down the city streets, in the evening

haze,

The moonlight guides my way, as the rhythm plays.

I hear the sound of the jazz band, filling up the air,

The sweet melodies embrace me, taking me somewhere.

Chorus:

In this jazzy world, where dreams come alive,
I let the music carry me, on this rhythmic drive.
With each chord and note, I find my soul set free,

In this jazzy world, where I long to be.

Verse 2:

The trumpet wails its story, in a smoky bar,
Piano keys dance gracefully, like a shooting star.

The bass line grooves along, as the drums keep time,

I close my eyes and feel the music, a transcendent climb.

Chorus:

In this jazzy world, where dreams come alive,
I let the music carry me, on this rhythmic drive.
With each chord and note, I find my soul set free,

In this jazzy world, where I long to be.

Bridge:

As the saxophone whispers secrets, in the midnight hour,

I surrender to the magic, feeling its timeless power.

The voices blend in harmony, telling stories untold,

In this jazzy symphony, my heart and mind unfold.

Chorus:

In this jazzy world, where dreams come alive,
I let the music carry me, on this rhythmic drive.
With each chord and note, I find my soul set free,

In this jazzy world, where I long to be.

Feel free to modify and adapt these lyrics to suit your musical style and personal expression. Enjoy the creative process!

Example 2

Me: I want to perform some Mississippi Delta Blues and Mississippi Hill Country Blues. Can you write me 2 set lists of 12 songs each using these parameters?

IT Corner: AI and ChatGPT continued

By John "JD" Drudul

ChatGPT: Certainly! Here are two set lists of 12 songs each, inspired by Mississippi Delta Blues and Mississippi Hill Country Blues:

Set List 1:

"Cross Road Blues" by Robert Johnson

"Boom Boom" by John Lee Hooker

"Death Letter" by Son House

"Dust My Broom" by Elmore James

"Rollin' and Tumblin'" by Muddy Waters

"Sitting on Top of the World" by Mississippi Sheiks

"Going Down South" by R.L. Burnside

"Come On in My Kitchen" by Skip James

"Catfish Blues" by Honeyboy Edwards

"Cypress Grove" by Skip James

"Meet Me in the City" by Junior Kimbrough

"Preachin' Blues" by Robert Johnson

Set List 2:

"Walkin' Blues" by Son House

"Statesboro Blues" by Blind Willie McTell

"Hoochie Coochie Man" by Muddy Waters

"Spoonful" by Howlin' Wolf

"Shake 'Em on Down" by Mississippi Fred McDowell

"It Hurts Me Too" by Elmore James

"Grinnin' in Your Face" by Son House

"All Night Long" by Junior Kimbrough

"I Can't Quit You Baby" by Willie Dixon

"Black Snake Moan" by Blind Lemon Jefferson

"Levee Camp Blues" by Mississippi Fred McDowell

"Big Road Blues" by Tommy Johnson

These songs capture the essence of Mississippi Delta Blues and Mississippi Hill Country Blues, showcasing a mix of influential artists and classic tunes. Enjoy your performances!

Example 3

Me: I'm writing an article for a newsletter. The topic is AI and ChatGPT. It is such a large spread out topic that I can't cover it all. Can you write the article for me summarizing AI and ChatGPT and give some examples on how it can be used for writing music?

ChatGPT: Sure, I'd be happy to help you write an article on AI and ChatGPT!

AI and ChatGPT:

An Introduction. Artificial intelligence (AI) is a broad field that involves the development of algorithms and computer programs that

can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as perception, reasoning, learning, and decision-making. AI has been transforming various industries, from healthcare to finance, by automating tasks and generating insights that were previously impossible or impractical for humans to perform.

One of the most exciting developments in the field of AI is the creation of language models, such as ChatGPT. These models are designed to generate human-like text based on patterns in large datasets of language. ChatGPT, in particular, is a language model developed by OpenAI that uses deep learning techniques to generate high-quality text in a wide range of domains.

Writing Music with AI and ChatGPT

One of the most promising applications of AI and ChatGPT is in the field of music composition. AI can help composers and musicians to generate new musical ideas, create unique combinations of melodies and harmonies, and even automate parts of the composition process.

Here are some examples of how AI and ChatGPT can be used for writing music:

Generating Melodies:

AI can be trained on large datasets of existing music to learn patterns and structures in different genres and styles. Once trained, AI models such as ChatGPT can generate new melodies based on the learned patterns. This can be useful for composers who are looking for new ideas or struggling with writer's block.

Harmonizing Melodies:

In addition to generating melodies, AI can also be used to create harmonies that complement the melody. This is a challenging task for human composers, as it requires an understanding of music theory and the ability to make creative decisions. AI models such as ChatGPT can automate this process by generating harmonies that fit the melody.

Composing Entire Songs:

AI can also be used to compose entire songs, from the melody to the harmony and the lyrics. This is a more complex task that requires the AI model to have a deeper understanding of the structure and conventions of different genres and styles. However, AI models such as

ChatGPT can generate high-quality songs that are indistinguishable from human-composed ones.

Conclusion:

AI and ChatGPT are rapidly transforming the music industry by providing new tools and techniques for composers and musicians. From generating melodies to composing entire songs, AI can help musicians to explore new creative territories and push the boundaries of what is possible in music composition.

As you can see, common sense and personalization are needed for some of these ChatGPT replies. You can keep adding more detailed prompts in a conversational mode to further refine the ChatGPT responses.

The tech world is going wild over this new technology. It is developing so quickly that some major players have requested a 6 month pause in its development to allay fears over its positive and negative ramifications. Some companies and universities are banning its use due to sensitive corporate data breaches and possible plagiarism.

Goldman Sachs estimates that 300 million jobs could be impacted globally due to the rise of ChatGPT and AI automation. Some possible jobs and skills being impacted are software engineers and coders, media and content creators, legal industry, market research analysts, teachers, finance related positions, traders, graphic designers, accountants, and customer service.

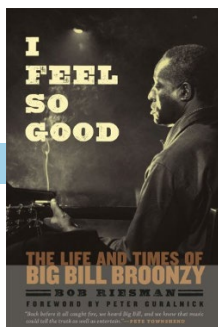
Now is the time to get on board with your career and to begin using ChatGPT to your advantage.

Do your own Google and YouTube searches on ChatGPT. There are also some good TED presentations on the subject. There's a lot of information out there on using this new tech. Try It. Have a Chat conversation. Have fun with it. Use it in a positive way. It's like the wild, wild west of technology all over again.



BLUES BOOK CORNER

By Kathryn Gregoire



Throughout the biography, author Bob Riesman reveals the many endearing qualities of Big Bill Broonzy, a charismatic, witty, innovative and ever-adapting performer, vocalist, story-teller, prolific songwriter, creative artist and generous mentor to many younger blues musicians, such as Memphis Slim, Muddy Waters, Jimmy Rodgers, and Little Walter.

The book club members fell in love with Big Bill Broonzy and all agreed he was someone they would like to have known in person. Members liked him so much they decided to also read his brief autobiography.

Riesman did an excellent job of acquainting us with Broonzy through sharing his story. Big Bill Broonzy came into the world on June 26, 1903, as Lee Conley Bradley, the fourth and last child of Frank and Mittie who lived as sharecroppers in the rural areas of Jefferson County outside Pine Bluff, Arkansas. His parents were avid church goers and even as an adult, out of respect, Big Bill never brought his guitar into their home.

Broonzy's life in the Jim Crow South influenced his music deeply, especially when his younger brother drowned while simultaneously a white youth was saved. He found the increase in lynchings following WWI disturbing.

Reisman describes Big Bill Broonzy on stage playing with many of the early blues masters. He astutely analyzes many of the songs written by Big Bill, explaining their origins and context. He gives the readers insights into Broonzy's personal activities and relationships.

"Almost everything that Big Bill did was mathematically perfect." - Eric Clapton

Throughout his life, Broonzy played with the greats of each era and profoundly influenced and inspired future artists, such as Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Eric Clapton. Broonzy himself credits John Hammond with bringing him to the forefront

I Feel So Good: The Life and Times of Big Bill Broonzy by Bob Riesman (2012) Big Bill Blues: William Broonzy's Story as told to Yannick Bruynoche (1955)

of the blues music world. Hammond had tried to get Robert Johnson to play at Carnegie Hall in the famous Spirituals to Swing Concert. When he discovered that Johnson had died, he got Broonzy. Broonzy had the audience from his first song "Just a Dream", where he described dreaming about being in the White House, which he saw as an impossibility for any black person.

Broonzy saw that many American performers were in trouble because of their beliefs so he assumed a cautious approach to politics. He did not participate in strikes and protests, instead he expressed his beliefs in his songs and writings. He became an integral part of the Folk Song movement first singing "I Came For To Sing" at the University of Chicago in 1947. As the author puts it "Something electrifying happened." Broonzy's "Black, Brown, and White Blues" song became an anthem for the civil rights movement.

Folkway Records recorded Pete Seeger, Woodie Guthrie, Leadbelly, Big Bill Broonzy and Studs Terkel. Pete Seeger made an instructional video of Broonzy and WFMT recorded a performance of Broonzy playing with Pete Seeger at Northwestern University. Racially integrated groups singing folk songs caught the attention of the world.

Starting overseas tours in 1951, Broonzy was in effect the first ambassador of the blues to Europe. In his first trip, he played in 26 cities in Brussels, France, Germany and Great Britain in 39 days. Over the course of the next five years, he spent a total of two years living in Europe. His time abroad gave him a strong grasp of racial pride, ideas about civil rights strategies, and an understanding of inter-racial relationships.

"When I first heard Bill, I realized I was listening to the music behind the music." - Peter Townsend

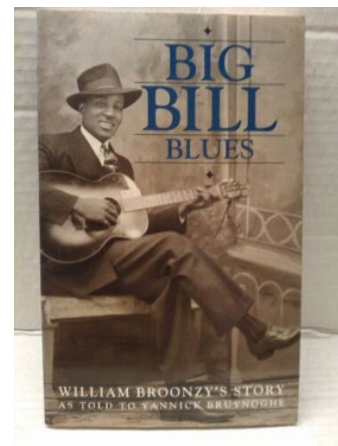
In 1953 Broonzy started writing short stories about the blues which he shared with his good Belgium friend, Yannick

Bruynoche. Bruynoche compiled the stories creating *Big Bill Blues: William Broonzy's Story as told to Yannick Bruynoche* (1955).

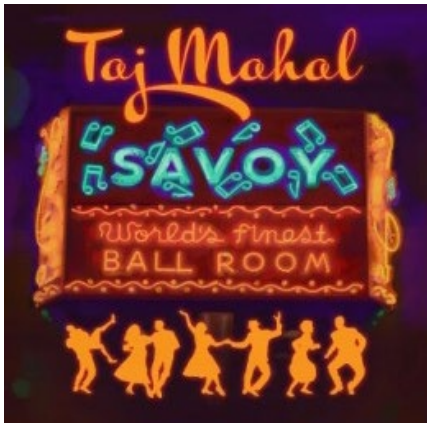
Broonzy begins the book with an explanation of his motivation: "The reason I'm writing this book is because I think that everybody would like to know the real truth about Negroes singing and playing in Mississippi." The book turned out to be every bit as entertaining and charming as Big Bill himself. A consummate story teller, he provides vivid details about some of the songs he has written and some of the musicians he has met along the way, such as Memphis Slim, Lil Green, Memphis Minnie, Frank Melrose, Washboard Sam, Studs Terkel, Sonny Boy Williamson, Mahalia Jackson, Tampa Red and Willie Dixon, who went on to replace Broonzy's role as mentor for many young blues musicians.

"It is great to say that I have worked with the best of the blues in the person of Big Bill Broonzy." - Willie Dixon

Following a difficult bout with cancer in mid-1950's, Big Bill Broonzy died on August 15, 1958. His pall bearers were Win Stracke, Muddy Waters, Ransom Knowling, Studs Terkel, Chet Roble, Brother John Sellers, Tampa Red, Sunnyland Slim and Otis Spann. Broonzy is buried in Lincoln Cemetery in Blue Island, Illinois.



BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE



Taj Mahal *Savoy (Stony Plain Records)*

Since he released his first two albums in 1967-68, Henry St. Claire Fredericks Jr. has not only recorded roughly 50 more, but he's also helped to define the face of Americana and roots music, world music, and a huge amount of great blues music.

By then, Fredericks was already calling himself Taj Mahal, having left behind his animal husbandry, veterinary science and agronomy studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he also led an R&B band called Taj Mahal & The Elektras. The Elektras turned out to be the correct prescription.

A big leap in time, space and mood later, Taj and longtime friend and producer John Simon have put together a tribute to the music that worked its way into Taj's consciousness as a child in his parents' home.

That is essentially the music of "Savoy," standards from the great American songbook, written by some of the great names in American music, a throwback to the sounds of the swing jazz big band era. "Savoy is just pure fun for me and a chance to display my jazz vocal chops," Taj explains. And Harlem's Savoy Ballroom is where his parents met during an Ella Fitzgerald show. Talk about predestination.

The "fun" that Taj mentions is a great description of the results here. The music swings easily but with an insistent groove from the fine band assembled for the occasion — a rhythm section of Danny Caron – guitar; Ruth Davies – bass; John Simon – piano; and Leon Joyce, Jr. – drums; with background vocals by Carla Holbrook, Leesa Humphrey and Charlotte McKinnon. Evan Price's violin graces two cuts. There's also a special group of horn players, including Erik Jekabson — trumpet; Mike Rinta — trombone; Sheldon Brown — clarinet, tenor sax; Charles McNeal — tenor sax; Andrew Stephens — trumpet; Kristen Strom — flute, tenor sax; Lincoln Adler — tenor sax.

All those players deserve special mention because the music they so effortlessly create

moves the album into an irresistible groove that provides the perfect background for Mahal's easy vocals that flow smoothly through his vintage, soon to be 81-year-old pipes, with a gruff elegance.

The classic songs? "Stompin' At The Savoy" with a spoken intro on how his parents met; "I'm Just A Lucky So-And-So," the fine and mellow "Gee Baby Ain't I Good To You," and easy-living "Summertime," the classic Duke Ellington "Mood Indigo," the bouncy "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby," the soulful alto sax intro on "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me."

Then there's "Sweet Georgia Brown" with fiddle romping, a sensuous duet with Maria Muldaur on "Baby It's Cold Outside," the horn-powered opening to "Lady Be Good," "Baby Won't You Please Come Home" with sweet fiddle, a swinging "Caldonia," "Killer Joe," a mostly instrumental that's a more recent tune, and the heartfelt eight minutes of "One For My Baby (And One More For The Road)."

This is a thoroughly enjoyable album, in which Taj Mahal stretches his many musical talents in yet another direction. The results sparkle with a fresh and swinging look at classic American music.



Duwayne Burnside *Acoustic Burnside* (Dolceola Recordings)

There is so much new music floating around these days that's based on the blues, incorporates the blues or updates the blues, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. Much of it is inspired, exciting music.

But sometimes, you just want to hear the blues. In this case, the North Mississippi Hill Country blues.

That's why I love this new album by Duwayne Burnside, son of the late, legendary R.L. Burnside — it's the blues in raw and primeval form, its roots nurtured in the fertile Mississippi blues soil

that Burnside calls home.

It's just the power of Burnside's rich, rugged vocals, propelled by his acoustic guitar, exploring vital, classic blues material.

He's been an exciting electric guitarist for decades, but this is his first new album in 17 years, recorded almost like field recordings in the area around Burnside's home in Holly Springs, Miss., in 2018 and 2019.

"Although I've never stopped playing shows, this album is a rebirth for me," Burnside says. "It puts me in the game again, but it's perfect, too, because playing stripped down like this, you can hear this music come right out of my heart because that's where my daddy put it."

The album kicks off with the hypnotic messaging of "Going Down South," "Jumper on the Line" and "Poor Black Mattie," three of his father's songs. "When I play them," he says, "I'm doing my best to show respect and love for him and the music. When I play on acoustic guitar, especially, it goes back even further, because this music started without electricity. I think about all the musicians who came up from the early days, out of the Delta and the hills, and took their music to the big cities and all around the world. It makes me feel like I'm a part of all that history."

Next, he shows his respect and creativity with his own "She Threw My Clothes Out," followed by "Alice Mae," written by R.L. Burnside for Duwayne's mother. That's followed by Burnside's rhythmic version of the very traditional, very classic Robert Johnson song, "Dust My Broom."

Those are followed by "Meet Me In the City," "Stay All Night," an alternative take of "She Threw My Clothes Out," the Roosevelt Sykes chestnut "44 Blues," "Bad Bad Pain," and the album closer, "Lord Have Mercy On Me," by Burnside's neighbor Junior Kimbrough, one of the founding fathers of the hill country style.

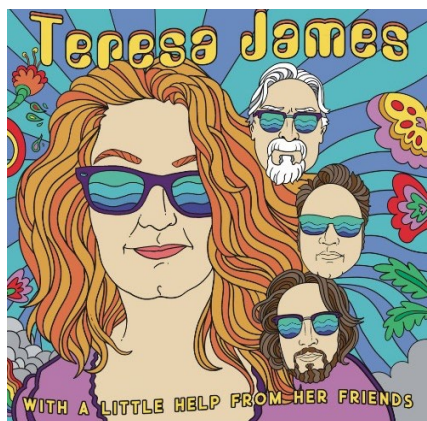
They all combine to create a unique recording of earthy, gritty blues that's filled with authentic, soulful music. And that feel requires a shoutout to Pinkie Pulliam on bass and Dan Torigoe on piano, who complete the sound on these sessions.

Torigoe, not incidentally, is the founder of this record label, Dolceola Recordings. He says that his label is "focused on analog field recording of American traditional music, with love and adoration for the great field recorders. I love R.L.'s first recordings made in 1968 by George Mitchell and wanted to make a sort of modern version of it with the current generation. So, while Duwayne is renowned for his solid electric guitar playing with influences from modern blues, the musical tradition of his father and his community is rooted very deep in his body and soul, and we wanted to capture that in a more primitive way."

And they have done just that, recording the blues the way they were meant to be heard. If you watch the video at the end (I hope you do!), you'll see Burnside on his front steps with some of that recording equipment, catching the music exactly as its created.

BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

It may indeed be primitive by today's digital standards, but so is the blues. If you're a fan, don't miss this album. If you haven't been, listen to some of the origins of American popular music.



Teresa James & the Rhythm Tramps *May Be The Last Time* With A Little Help From Her Friends (Blue Heart Records)

Did you ever wonder what the Beatles would sound like if they were born and raised in Houston (Texas, of course)? And had a honey-voiced, soulful female lead singer?

Neither did I.

However, this latest album from Teresa James and the Rhythm Tramps should finally answer that unasked question.

James, along with husband, producer and bassist, Terry Wilson, has put together a sweet and sassy album of 10 Beatles songs covered with her uniquely flavored vocals and the Tramps' usual crisp backing.

Joining the band for this effort are keyboardist Kevin McKendree and drummer Richard Millsap, with backing vocals by Lucy Wilson and Nicki Bluhm, and special guest Yates McKendree, son of Kevin.

It's an impressive lineup for an impressive outing tackling the works of the Fab Four. The results are just as impressive.

Everything kicks off on one of my favorite tracks, "Ticket to Ride," with James' vocals punching out a soulful rocking vibe, closing the final few bars by soaring over McKendree's rollicking piano. Then comes "Taxman," an unlikely but gorgeous pairing of James' honeyed tones with a cloud of psychedelic herbal essence floating in the air. You can almost see the light show.

"Don't Let Me Down" is next, as James turns it into a soul-drenched anthem rich with her pleading vocals. "Happy Just to Dance with You" adds a touch of funkiness to deliver it from pure

Beatlemania into a guitar-laced bit of soul.

"Oh Darlin'" (another favorite cut) turns into a searing duet with Yates McKendree's sharp guitar fueling a lusty vocal burn as James' voice simply scorches the air. "You've Got To Hide Your Love Away," originally an acoustic track, stirs in a taste of Motown, putting James in front of soulful backup vocals.

The band turns playful with the joyful "Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me And My Monkey," again adding tough, rhythmic backing. "You Won't See Me" gives James a smooth vocal turn. "No Reply" adds a little Latin twist, again adding backup vocals for an extra dimension. A brightly swinging "Think For Yourself" wraps it up with the Tramps giving George Harrison's tune a shuffling, thoughtful musical reappraisal.

"This was so much fun and such a labor of love," says James. "I have been a Beatles fan since I was a little girl and having known all these songs inside and out for so many years, it was a real challenge to try and capture a bluesier, more Southern vibe but still retain the original spirit of the songs. And because we were doing it basically just for fun, I felt like I could stretch out just a little bit more and be a little looser with it."

And it all works. This is a thoroughly enjoyable album, whether you're a Beatles fan or a Teresa James fan. Or both. And I'm a big fan of the sassy, sultry voice of Teresa James. James and the Tramps plus friends don't just cover these songs; they reimagine them in their own style and shape them into a delightful album that makes the music fresh — it's just like a magical mystery tour.



Savoy Brown *Blues All Around* (Quarto Valley Records)

Savoy Brown (originally the Savoy Brown Blues Band), one of the quintessential and most prolific of the British blues-rock bands, was formed in London by Kim Simmonds in 1965. That's right. They're older than many of us.

Simmonds was the founder, guitarist and primary songwriter of the band, and the only member who remained constant in its 57 years of existence. They came out of the British blues-rock tradition, but settled in New York state, and much of the band's musical success came in the U.S.

This session, "Blues All Around," the band's 42nd album, was completed just before Simmonds died in December of 2022. The Savoy Brown band for this album was the trio Simmonds formed in 2012 with bassist Pat DeSalvo and drummer Garnet Grimm.

The dozen songs here, all Simmonds originals, were recorded a little differently this time, due to his illness. In order to make the recording process easier than their usual live in-studio work, Simmonds created his tracks, which were then overlaid by DeSalvo and Grimm. No problem. It's still excellent music.

It all begins with a short, seductive vocal blues intro — "Falling Through" — less than a minute long, but it sets just the right mood for the music that follows. "Black Heart" shuffles into view next, with guitar and organ riding behind Simmonds' gruff vocals.

Highlights for me include "Going Down South," which adds haunting slide that enhances the stark poetry of the locals. The title track, "Blues All Around," leads with eloquent guitar work that speaks volumes in its sparseness. Simmonds lets his guitar do much of the talking without overwhelming the listener. "Texas Love" rides along hard on the back of some tough distorted guitar fuzz. "Winning Hand" churns hard and deep with a passionate guitar solo. "Can't Go Back to My Hometown" takes a more lyrical, melodic approach and the closer, "Falling Through the Cracks," puts Simmonds' heartfelt, half-spoken vocals out in front of his striking solo guitar.

This excellent album is a solid testament to Simmonds' long journey and legacy in the world of the blues, which are indeed all around.

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

BSCP 25th Anniversary Guitar



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