



Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania
www.bscpblues.com

BLUES NEWS

Apr - Jun 2025

MOM I PICNIC: WOMEN IN THE BLUES

Sunday, May 25, 2025



See page 4 for details

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From your President...

Having just attended the Frank Bey documentary film screening at Zoetropolis in Lancaster, I am inspired by the power of his music and of a life well-lived. The man exuded love and believed that his purpose on earth was to uplift others which he did and still does through his beautiful soul blues music and personal philosophy that he demonstrated daily.

Thank you to Tom and Kathy Dwyer for six years of dedication to documenting Frank Bey's life and to Sallie Bengtson of Nola Blue Inc. for compiling a new CD creating a legacy of his songs. The title of his CD personifies him: PEACE (p. 14). The three of them led a Q&A session that gave us further insights into Frank Bey and the making of a documentary (p.12).

I also found it very moving to be in a movie theater with people who love blues music and who cherish and honor those who bring it to us. Cheers to the enthusiastic audience members, who spent their afternoon celebrating Frank Bey, blues music, and our blues community.

A shout-out to the volunteers who made the day possible through their generous service: Hannah Sherman, Valerie McCaffrey, Sallie Bengtson, Lewis Bechtold, Christie Cosmore, Michelle Fogel, and Michael Rinehart. Much gratitude to Mike Madrigale and his staff at Zoetropolis who provided us with such professionalism.

BSCP is in the midst of celebrating Women in the Blues with the talented Gayle Harrod being the opener for the Winter Show in February (p.12) and the dynamic Joanna Connor headlining the Spring Show in April (p.6). The line up for the Mom I Picnic in May created by Mike Easton includes six of our outstanding local blues women: Sherry Saltzman, Marianna Wright Schaffer, Rose Hudson, Erica Everest, Skyla Burrell, and Christina Klucker (p.4). Savannah

Graybill is preparing a Women in the Blues Spotify Music List for us (p.8).

Looking back on the long winter days, I wonder how we dealt with the bitter cold, the darkness and isolation. Some people take a break from it by going to visit other areas, such as our long-time BSCP friend, Roger Hammer, who now lives in the Midwest. He thought of us on his visit to St. John and the US Virgin Islands jams and shared his experience (p.13).

For those of us who stayed local, we are fortunate that Rich Ruoff brought Blue Monday in the Lizard Lounge (formerly at the Chameleon) to The Village in Lancaster PA (p.5), making cold winter nights much warmer!

And the Nate Myers Trio has also found a new home on Tuesday evenings. You can now listen to them and other musicians joining in to jam at The Underground LIVE. Want more places to go? The BSCP Calendar on the BSCPblues.com website and the Facebook Blues Society of Central PA Group are great resources to find out who is playing in Central PA.

Along with the end of winter, March brings us the CPMHOF Music Awards. BSCP congratulates blues musicians Corty Byron, Ben Brandt, and Erica Everest for their Music Awards (p.5).



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



Peylia Marsema Balinton

October 16, 1935 - December 20, 2024

Peylia Marsema Balinton, better known as Sugar Pie DeSanto, got her start in 1955 when she toured with the Johnny Otis Revue, and a few years later toured with the James Brown Revue before putting out hit single "I Want to Know." In 1965, she released "Do I Make Myself Clear," the first of multiple duets with Etta James. She would win multiple awards later in her career, including a Bay Area Music Award, a Pioneer Award, and induction to the Blues Hall of Fame.



William "Don" Nix

September 27, 1941 - December 31, 2024

William "Don" Nix, born in Memphis, Tennessee. After an early career playing the saxophone, he became a session musician for Stax Records. In the mid-1960s, he worked as a songwriter and producer for a litany of blues acts, including Leon Russell, John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers, and Freddie King. His best known work is the blues-rock standard "Going Down," which has been covered by greats like the Who, the Rolling Stones, and Freddie King.



Georgie "The Blacksmith" Bonds

1953 - January 13, 2025

George E. Bonds Jr. was a Philly blues staple, born and raised in the City of Brotherly Love. His nickname was no joke - for fifteen years, Georgie shod horses while he strummed guitars and did some singing. He hosted monthly jams at Warmdaddy's and released his first CD, *Sometimes I Wonder*, to critical acclaim. Over his storied career he was in the Broadway hit, *It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues*, which was nominated for four Tony Awards and Best Musical; He was inducted into the Pennsylvania Blues Hall of Fame and had a role in the 2018 movie *Concrete Cowboy*.



Barry Goldberg

December 25, 1942 - January 22, 2025

Barry Goldberg was a prolific blues keyboardist, songwriter, and producer. Even as a teenager, he was sitting in with Muddy Waters, Otis Rush, and Howlin' Wolf, and he played with Bob Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. In his half-a-century career, it would be easier to name major acts he didn't perform with! Some of the hit albums he contributed to include Leonard Cohen's *Death of a Ladies' Man*, the Ramones' *End of the Century*, and his own self-titled *Barry Goldberg*, produced by Bob Dylan.



Chuck "Popcorn" Loudon

Unknown - February 13, 2025

Chuck "Popcorn" Loudon truly lived a life full of music. Born and raised in Saint Louis, Missouri, Popcorn started playing drums when he was 6, hit the road at 9, and recorded his first track with his dad at only 12 years old. Best known for his powerful years drumming and touring with Michael Burks, Popcorn also drummed with greats like Buddy Miles, Otis Taylor, Marquise Knox, and the Muddy Waters Band. Later on, he was often found encouraging young drummers at jams, especially in St. Louis mainstays like Hammerstone's.



Linsey Alexander

July 23, 1942 - February 22, 2025

Linsey Alexander was born in Holly Springs, MS, along the Mississippi Blues Trail, an occurrence that would foreshadow a decades-long career across multiple continents and an induction to the Chicago Blues Hall of Fame. A former police officer and sharecropper's son, he became a full-time musician and recording artist at 58. His energetic electric blues guitar and vocal work shared the stage with greats like Buddy Guy, Magic Slim, and B. B. King during his time in Chicago and beyond.



Gino Matteo

March 18, 1982 - March 23, 2025

Gino Matteo, an original blues guitarist and singer, participated in a national guitar competition at age 24, winning the west coast rounds. He toured with the Sugaray Rayford hit machine for nearly a decade. After meeting vocal powerhouse Jade Bennett in 2010, they decided to go nomad and live full time off-grid. They included the BSCP jam at Champions in their travels. In 2022, together with Kid Andersen, they produced the *Shake the Roots* CD, with all songs written by Matteo and Bennett.

MOM I PICNIC CELEBRATES LOCAL BLUES WOMEN

By Kathryn Gregoire

BSCP is celebrating Women in the Blues this year. The highlight of the celebration will be the Mom I Picnic (named after our most revered woman in the Blues community, Virginia Ivanoff). Each blues act will feature a local female blues artist who will be performing at the BSCP annual fundraiser on Sunday, May 25, from 1 pm – 7 pm at the Mechanicsburg Club Picnic Grounds. Grounds open at noon.

Food will be ready at 2 pm. BSCP provides chicken and hot dogs with sides of mac 'n cheese, potato salad, and beans. Snacks like chips and pretzels, and desserts to share will be appreciated. BSCP provides kegs of beer. Advance tickets are \$20 each; \$25 at the entrance.

Hannah Sherman oversees the kitchen. Please contact her at (443) 617-6693 if you wish to volunteer. Mike Easton is coordinating the bands and Gary "Rocky" Rothrock is heading up the sound system.

Women of the Blues

Sherry Salzman has been performing since 1972, first starting in blues rock bands, then gravitating to traditional classic blues after discovering Bessie Smith. Later she delved into more urban and Chicago Blues and then came back to her acoustic roots. She considers vocals as her first love and guitar as the second. Salzman started the Cat Island Blues Band with Carolann Jones and the Stellar French guitarist Guy Debau. They were the first female fronted band to open the original Chameleon Blues Festival. They began the Marietta Blues Festival and the first weekly Blues Jam in Lancaster County. Salzman notes "Growing up between the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and Lancaster county with family musicians I heard and loved many kinds of music, but the blues is timeless, especially when it stays primitive and passionate."

Marianna Wright Schaffer is a vocalist, fiddle and bass player who has been performing for the last 13 years with the Central PA band "Acoustic Stew" as one of four lead vocalists, lending her fiddle to the unique sound of "the Stew". Marianna brings a background of country and bluegrass with her to the blues, having opened up for many national acts in the past

including George Jones, Marty Stuart, The Beach Boys, and her main influence, Charlie Daniels. Marianna has recorded extensively and performed at the songwriters club, The Bluebird Café, in Nashville. Marianna served as President of the Blues Society in 2013, when the Jam moved to Champions. She also plays in the duo "Pair of Aces" with Stew guitarist, Bob Wineland. You can find her playing bass regularly at the BSCP weekly Jam.

Rose Hudson has been a part of the music scene in York, Lancaster, Reading and Harrisburg since 2000. She started her career singing jazz and R&B. After attending the rock, funk and blues jam sessions at Cherry's Jubilee in Lancaster, she embraced the blues. This afforded her the opportunity to perform at the Copenhagen Blues Fest in 2006 with Danish blues guitarist Kenn Lending and keyboardist Henning Verner. Her best friend, John McGovern of Jam studios, recorded and produced her blues CD, *Like a Rose*, with Lending and Verner and local musicians Vinny Hunter, Mike Serbangandio and Aaron Walker. Rose has since enjoyed singing different genres but is most well-known for singing the blues. For Rose, blues always makes her feel like she's come back home.

Erica Lyn Everest has been singing professionally since she was 8 years old. Now 35, she has played in over 400 shows bringing a soulful sound and a sultry twist to all of her music. Known as a "powerhouse", Erica's love for jazz and blues is clear when you hear the passion in her vocals. She has performed for the Downton Abbey movie premiere and shared the stage with world-renowned musicians. Previously nominated for Central Pennsylvania's Best Female Vocalist and Best Jazz Artist, Erica won the award for the 2025 Female Cover Artist. A passionate advocate for blues and jazz, she serves on the board of the Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania and loves bringing music to life through Open Mic nights and themed theatrical shows.

Skyla Burrell, singer-songwriter, guitarist and pianist, was born and raised in California. She relocated to the East Coast in her early 20's where she eventually co-founded the Skyla Burrell Band. A 2012 Blues Hall of Fame Inductee, the Skyla

Burrell Band is a hardworking/touring contemporary blues band featuring the stunning dual lead guitar work of Skyla and Mark Tomlinson. The band's music has been featured in CBS prime time shows, *DaVinci's Inquest* and *The Bridge*. The band has been actively performing and recording original blues music since 2002. They have released six albums, including *Working Girl Blues* and *Blues Scars* with the VizzTone Label Group. The Skyla Burrell Band has garnered recognition in the blues community nationwide and abroad for their energetic live performances and their contributions to the genre.

Christina Klucker, originally from Atlanta, GA, moved to Harrisburg in 1989 where she met and married musician Todd Klucker and together they raised their two sons. Christina says "10 years ago, I was tearing it up on the dance floor. Seven years ago Todd reeled me in off the dance floor and threw me behind the bass and I've been The Mighty Klucks bass player since minus Covid and a year or so break fighting cancer. Looking forward to getting back out and playing again soon." And BSCP is looking forward to Christina being back on stage with the high energy Mighty Klucks – the whole family!



Mom I & Greg Hogg

Greg's Calendar Girls (2017 – 2023) will be on display in the second pavilion at the Mom I Picnic for your perusal. Virginia Ivanoff (Mom I), in her kitchen attire, pictured with Greg, is the first calendar girl (January 2017). Many archival treasures can be viewed on the BSCPblues.com website under the MORE icon on the top right of the home page, including In Memory of, BSCP Archives, and Past Events.

CPMHOF ANNOUNCES 2025 CENTRAL PA MUSIC AWARDS

By Kathryn Gregoire

Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame (CPMHOF) was founded in 2019 to "recognize, support, and grow the area's longstanding and diverse music heritage." This year's music awards show was held on March 5 at the American Music Theater in Lancaster, PA.

Here are some of the highlights for blues fans. Nominations for the Blues Award included Award winner Corty Byron, Bobby Gentilo, Nate Myers & the Aces, Gave Stillman, Switch Fu, and Alex Lee Warner. Ben Brandt won the Blues Rock Award. Other nominees included Colin Alvarez Band, Dustin Douglas & the Electric Gentlemen, Felix and the Hurricanes, The Jeremy Edge Project, Lucid Ruby, Six Whiskey Revival, Soul Miners Union, Sweet Desire, and Tate Lehman and the Blue Chilis. The Soul Miners Union won the Blues Rock Award in 2024.

Erica Lyn Everest, a member of the BSCP Board of Directors, won the 2025 Female Cover Artist Award. She was previously

nominated for the 2024 Female Vocalist Award and the 2021 Best Jazz Artist Award. The Erica Everest Band will be performing for BSCP at the Mom I Picnic fundraiser on Sunday, May 25 at Mechanicsburg Club Picnic Grounds, Mechanicsburg PA.

In addition, the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame announced Spot Awards winners prior to the March 5 ceremony. These awards are for categories that are not recognized annually. One such unique award this year was for the Best Collaborative Music Event. CPMHOF awarded it to Wheel's On Fire, a musical tribute band which recreated The Last Waltz, a 1976 concert which marked the end of touring for The Band. The event was held on the 48th anniversary of the concert (November 27, 2024) at Englewood Hershey.

The concert featured some of Central Pennsylvania's finest performers playing the parts of the guest stars and was the work of talented professionals from the

music industry, including Mike Banks, Chris Santanna, Nate Myers, Corty Byron, Dan Jamison, Jesse Eisenbise, Martin Gangl, Sarah Fiore, Jennifer Hara, Dave Devonshire, Jeremy Piece, Josh Thompson, Marcy Thompson, John Bigham, Rob Primrose, Jason Mescia, Jim Aguzzi, Pete Netznik, Jimmy Blue, Fred Pellegrini Jr, Aaron Daniel Gaul, Chris Hynum, Eric Wise, Travis Bossler, Eric Ursprung, and David Turby. The whole show, shot and edited by Nick Chohany, can be watched by searching for *Wheel's on Fire Re-Creates: The Last Waltz* on YouTube

BSCP congratulates the many talented blues musicians and music industry professionals who bring so much wonderful music into our lives. For a full list of the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame inductees and award winners, go online to cpmhof.com.



BLUE MONDAY AT THE LANCASTER VILLAGE NIGHTCLUB

By Kathryn Gregoire

Sometimes great ideas from the past return, every bit as good, maybe even better. Such is the case with Blue Monday at the Lizard Lounge, except now the Lizard Lounge is at the Village Nightclub instead of the Chameleon Club. Fortunately the Lounge is still being run by Rich Ruoff; the setting has a similar, but classier, vibe; and the quality of musicians continues to be exciting. For ex., Grammy Nominee and Blues Award Winner Mark Hummel, harmonica player extraordinaire, is scheduled for May 12. Nate Myers Band is scheduled for April 7.

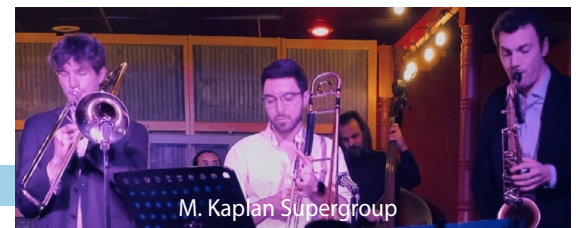
Those who live in the Lancaster area are very lucky to have Blue Monday to start our week in a relaxed, congenial setting with life-affirming blues music. With the Lizard Lounge featuring outstanding local, regional, and national/international blues musicians, I hope

to see you there every Blue Monday evening.

Located at 205 N. Christian St, doors open at 7 pm, first set is 7:30 – 8:30 pm, second set is 9 – 10 pm. A light menu is available. Ticket prices range from \$7 - \$15. Free parking in the Village parking lot. For details, call 717-397-5000 or go to thevillagenightclub.com.



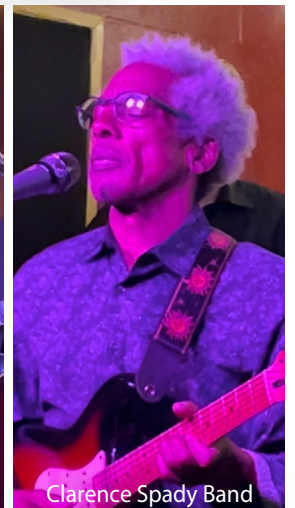
Lowry Blues Band



M. Kaplan Supergroup



Tony Holiday & Jad



Clarence Spady Band

BSCP SPRING SHOW FEATURES

JOANNA CONNOR

By Kathryn Gregoire



and work locally four nights per week, while raising her two children as a single mom. Joanna also recorded several albums for the highly-respected MC Records during that decade.

In 2019, one of the videos of her fierce guitar work caught the eyes and ears of one of the most prominent guitarists of the modern era - Joe Bonamassa - as well as director Adrian Lynne (*Flash Dance*, *Fatal Attraction*). Lynne offered her a scene performing in the movie *Deep Water* starring Ben Affleck. At the same time, Joe Bonamassa and his KTBA Records label gave her the opportunity to make a studio album. Both projects happened right before the COVID 19 epidemic and subsequent lockdown.

The KTBA album, *4801 South Indiana*, was released in February of 2021 to immense critical acclaim and a number one spot on the Billboard blues chart. The *Deep Water* film was released on Hulu in March, 2022.

Now being a part of the Gulf Coast Records family, Joanna Connor's career path is in full-bloom, playing with sympathetic musicians and a support staff all in lock-step, along with a common purpose and goal of reaching for the top of the blues world. Joanna's tsunami of musical energy and passion is now unleashed on record with *Best of Me*. – Mark Pucci Media

Numerous videos of Connor's powerful and

moving Chicago Blues Rock performances are available on YouTube. Dr. Wesley Britton writes to us "On our Sept 22, 2023 show, the Queen of Blues Guitar, Joanna Connor, tells you all about her hot new Best of Me disc with stories to tell about her years in Chicago, on the road, in the studio, and yes, we play you a few samples."

https://media.artistfirst.com/ArtistFirst_FlaskBack_2023-09-22_Woods_and_Conner.mp3

The Opening Act will be **Flatfoot Sam and the Educated Fools**, a well-established band that loves for all to have a good time whether sitting and listening or jumping and shouting.

Singer, song-writer and harmonica player Flatfoot Sam (Sam Peightal) has been performing a unique blend of Swing, Jump, Chicago and Down in the Basement 'Gut Bucket' Blues for nearly 40 years. In addition to being a dynamic front man, Sam is a strong and soulful singer. Whether he's shoutin' jump blues or crooning a ballad, he delivers with intensity and passion. Flatfoot Sam's band usually consists of Pete Kanaras on guitar, Clark Matthews on drums, Randy Ball on bass, and either Bill Heid or Tam Sullivan on piano.

The band played for BSCP's first New Year's Eve Party held in 2002 at the Compri Hotel on Eisenhower Blvd in Harrisburg. They were so popular that they were brought back to play again in 2003 and 2004. The photo is credited to Bob Creed.

Singer, guitarist, and songwriter, **Joanna Connor**, will be featured in our Spring Show on Sunday, April 27, 2025, at Champions. She has established a solid blues rock career with 15 albums and 2 singles released since she came on the Chicago scene in 1984. She was nominated for a Blues Music Award for Best Instrumentalist (guitar) following the release of her *Best of Me* album in 2023.

Mark Pucci Media describes Joanna Connor in the following press release.

Joanna Connor was born in Brooklyn, New York, raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, and after beginning her career there at the age of 17, packed a suitcase, a Fender Twin Amp, a guitar and bought a bus ticket to the Blues Mecca of Chicago, where her goal was to be in a cracking blues band learning from the best. A mere month after moving to the Windy City, Delta blues heavyweight Johnny Littlejohn hired her. A few months after that, Dion Payton enlisted her to be a part of his 43rd Street Blues Band, where they held residencies at the hallowed Checkerboard Lounge and the Kingston Mines blues clubs, and were the backing band behind every major talent in the city. Joanna went on to tour with sax great AC Reed before starting her own band at the urging of the Kingston Mines owner. Blind Pig Records signed Joanna in 1989 and released several records on her before she went on to become the second artist to sign with Ruf Records; subsequently releasing many records for the German-based label, which led to a decade of touring throughout Europe.

In 2002, The House of Blues in Chicago offered Joanna and her band a weekly residency, and with her additional residency at the Kingston Mines, Connor made the decision to come off the road touring grind for a while





In the Spotlight...

TODD KLUCKER



By Hannah Sherman



The Mighty Klucks

Todd grew up in the house he lives in now between Marysville and Duncannon surrounded by a couple of hundred 8 tracks gotten by parents who subscribed to Columbia House music. Their preference was country: Porter Wagoner, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash and The Statler Brothers among others. He loved riding dirt bikes up over the mountain and in seventh grade he started listening to his neighbor's rock music; they liked the Doobie Brothers, Aerosmith, Queen, etc. They loved playing along with their air guitar. Can't you just see it?

In college, where Todd played football, his next influencer was another neighbor across the hall at Millersville. Todd had an acoustic guitar and started taking lessons 3-4 times a week. He was so enamored he decided to change his major to music, but having no background in music, he flunked twice. Being nothing but persistent, the third time was the charm. Millersville's music program is based on classical works, so after a year he transferred to the Guitar Institute of Technology in California in 1988. Coming back home, his goal was to

write a teaching book and give lessons at Guitar Works School of Music in Pennbrook. His first student was Chris Aux, who was his first success story, as many of us have seen him out playing. His hook was that the first lesson was free so two students turned to 20, then 50. He couldn't handle them all so he got two of his students to start teaching beginners. He taught there for about five years in the 90's.

When Todd was in California he wanted to learn every style on guitar. There was a club between Sunset Strip and Hollywood Boulevard called Falini's that was always jammed because the music was good every time. One night there was a blues trio that was off the charts, so between that and a Robin Ford seminar, he fell in love with the blues. He wanted to learn every blues guitar style - finger style to contemporary. When he had been in the Millersville program, one assignment was to attend three concerts - classical, jazz and pop. He went to the Tower Theater in Philadelphia and chanced to get tickets at the door for the 16th row, center aisle, for Stevie Ray Vaughn, his first major influencer. He remembers, "I

wanted to play like that!" He studied every lick and saw him four more times.

Todd joined Rosie and the Naturals in 1993. Todd says, "Hats off to Bill Wasch and Jay Kirssin. I learned a lot from them. They showed me the ropes and taught me to be more professional on stage. Bill was like a big brother." After about four years with them, between playing two to three gigs a week, band practice and giving lessons, not to mention a "regular" job, he gave up music and decided to focus on his growing family. His next venture was to coach wrestling for 17 years. That was another success story. Ask him or his wife Christina about their son's wrestling accolades.

One night at a party, Pete Netznik mentioned that Nate Myers and the Aces needed a guitar player, and he jumped right back into it as if he had never stopped playing. Todd says, "I hold those guys dear to me."

Todd and Christina's retirement dream started coming through in 2019 when the Mighty Klucks came into being. Christina's very first gig was opening for Hybrid Ice in front of 300 people. They also opened for Nate and the Aces on New Year's Eve. Todd says, "Playing with my wife is the most fun I've had with any band." Todd has also taught his sons, Austin and Alex, to play. They both play guitar, bass and drums, and will be joining their parents as they headline our Mom I Picnic in May. Wow!

Todd says about himself, "I know about guitar, wrestling, and making teeth!" Turns out his "regular" job of 43 years is doing crown and bridgework as a dental technician. He also says, "As of this day, I have 1,094 days until retirement!" Until then his favorite pastime is watching his sons play in their own bands.

We also see him on stage at the jam where he says, "It's a great place for all types of players to come together. There are not many places where players of all levels are welcome to come out. We're lucky to have it organized as it is. It takes dedication from everyone involved."

Pete Netznik. "Todd is an excellent guitarist & musician.... and an even better bro! I've been proud to share the stage with him every time I've had the opportunity. And we've had some great conversations cruising to & from gigs through the years! Awesome dude!!!"

BLUES ACROSS BORDERS

By Savannah Graybill

In November 2024, Benny Turner, Lil' Jimmy Reed, and Trudy Lynn had the amazing experience of performing together as The Nola Blue Revue at the Lucerne Blues Festival in Switzerland. The Lucerne Blues Festival is a renowned non-profit event held in Lucerne, Switzerland, every November. It showcases world-class blues musicians and covers a wide range of blues styles. The festival occurs in iconic venues like the Grand Casino Lucerne, offering an intimate atmosphere where fans can interact with the artists. Since its inception in 1995, it has grown into one of Europe's premier blues festivals, featuring performances, workshops, and lectures.

I had the opportunity to talk with Benny Turner and get some of his thoughts on experiencing blues across borders.

1. How was your experience performing at the Lucerne Blues Festival? What stood out to you the most? Lucerne Blues Festival is one of the best festivals out there and it was a great experience. It is a first-class event from top to bottom. The accommodations, the food, the transportation, and all of the staff and volunteers get a 5-star rating! The best part was hearing how much everyone enjoyed and appreciated our shows. They really made us feel special.

2. What were some of the highlights of the festival for you, both as a performer and as an attendee? Spending time onstage and off with our special guest Harrell "Young Rell" Davenport was definitely a highlight. That young man gives me hope that traditional blues will carry on in the future and not fade away after our generation has gone. It made all of us feel good to be able to share the experience of performing with him on his first European tour. I know it won't be his last!

3. Did you get a chance to see any other artists perform? If so, who were you most impressed by and why? I got a chance to catch some of Ruthie Foster's set and she and the band were top-notch. I heard some of the Nick Moss Band's show before our Saturday night set and they were great. Young Rell Davenport was also very impressive and a great addition to our band. He already knows so much at a young age, but he is also always open to learning more. That is going to be a big influence on his success.

4. How do you think your experience at the Lucerne Blues Festival will influence your future music projects or performances? The energy and excitement of the fans and fellow musicians really inspired me to keep performing. Even though I'm

85, it lets me know I still have music to share!

5. What did you learn from your experience at the festival that you plan to incorporate into your music or performances moving forward? My music and my shows always come from the heart. If I don't feel it, I can't play it. And the audience can feel it, too.

6. Can you share a memorable moment or story from your time at the Lucerne Blues Festival? The bass player from one of the other bands talked with me after our main show and he really made me feel special. He had so many nice things to say and was really



Jimmy Reed, Trudy Lynn, and Benny Turner
Lucerne Blues Festival

excited about meeting me. It's a great feeling to know that today's players still appreciate those of us who have been out there a long time. That's cool.

7. Any exciting plans for the future? Will you be attending the Lucerne Blues Festival again? If the good Lord blesses me, I would love to get back to Lucerne Blues Festival again. I thought my BT album might be my last, but I've got more music I want to record. So, I've already got plans to get back in the studio!

SPOTIFY

Hey Blues lovers! We are excited to share our latest project: an official playlist for the Blues Society of Central Pa.

This playlist is updated every two months with blues music that matches a theme.

The current theme is music from artists who won the International Blues Challenge.

Be sure to save the playlist so you don't miss any updates.

1) Download or open Spotify. 2) Search for Blues Society of Central Pa. 3) Listen and enjoy.



MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS:

Sallie Bengtson

by Hannah Sherman

Growing up in Reading, PA, Sallie was born into a musical family. Her parents and brother are all classically trained, her parents with master's degrees in sacred (church) music and her brother with a DMA in music. Sallie says, "I took piano lessons forever and ever and ever."

Her musical interest began with Top 40 but when she started to work with someone who sang in a blues band, her friend asked if she would like to go, she replied, "Blues? That sounds depressing." She immediately identified with the blues and started following the band. After attending a blues festival in Reading where she saw bigger bands, bought their music and started reading liner notes, she then took a "Deep Dive" into the blues.

One of those festival artists was Tinsley Ellis, who is a Freddie King fan, leading her to discover Freddie King, too. That love of King became very ironic when she met King's half-brother, Benny Turner, in the late 1990's. A frequent traveler to New Orleans, she was surprised to learn from a friend that Freddie's brother lived in New Orleans where he worked as the band-leader for Marva Wright, touring internationally.

Years later, Sallie was at a crossroads in her life after closing a business she'd had for two years, going through a divorce and caring for a young son. She remembered Benny's generosity with sharing his musical life stories of Chicago and always thought he should write a book. So she asked him about it, and he said "Yes." "He took me to Texas and Chicago to jog his memory and we got a musicologist to do background research to tie it all together. He wanted to make sure everything was correct. Then I worked with him to put it in his words."

Hearing his stories, Sallie discovered he had some unreleased music that he had

recorded, which she was inspired to help him finish. She remembers, "I didn't have a clue, but figured things out as I went along. His first album, Journey, was released in 2014 and I drummed up publicity, soon realizing I was going from being a fan to making my own place in the business doing something I loved. When I found how to combine my love of music with my business skills, I found my place." The event was the impetus for her to start her labels, Nola Blue Records and later, MoMojo Records.

Benny's book Survivor - The Benny Turner Story was read by the BSCP Book Club and we enjoyed an engaging birthday lunch with Benny. Sallie is a self-described workaholic and claims she is a boring person. "I don't go out a lot but when I do it's usually music related. I love blues festivals and music of any kind. I was born too late and missed seeing a lot of the great live music of the sixties and seventies. My musical interest leans toward soul blues, but I enjoy all kinds of acts and got to see BB King on his 80th birthday tour. I love to travel, especially for music. And I love all my label artists, like Clarence Spady, Trudy Lynn and, of course, Benny."

Digging deeper, she told me a fascinating story from her time working in the family business, Maier's Bakery. Her great-grandfather came over from Germany in the late 1800's, ultimately settling in Berks County and starting a bakery in 1908. "When we sold the business in 1998, my father was the vice-president, my uncle was the president and I was the first member of the 4th generation and in charge of benefits and insurance for 1100 employees." The insurance rep recommended Sallie to the insurance company to be a model for an advertising campaign. Sallie says, "I was a magazine model!" She was in Time, Newsweek and Sports Illustrated. Not so boring.

Sallie's favorite thing about the blues society is our commitment to regularly bringing in national acts. "I appreciate the ability to see such good quality shows so close to home."

Kathryn Gregoire. BSCP is so fortunate to have Sallie Bengtson, MBA, on the BSCP Board with her many talents, creativity, generosity, dedication and passion for the blues. President of an award-winning record label company and a second brand-new one, she brings a wealth of contacts, knowledge and ideas regarding the blues music industry which she freely shares with BSCP and the community. I can always count on Sallie to come up with innovative and creative approaches to her work as our Public Relations Chairperson and her service on the Education and Events Committees. And she doesn't just have the ideas, but she does the hard work to make things happen. Sallie loves our Blues Society of Central PA and we love her!

Benny Turner. I've known Sallie for a long time and watched her grow from a blues fan to running a big blues label. She is one of the hardest workers I know, and she does it because she loves the music. I'm proud of what she's done and being a part of how it started. I know this is just the beginning and she's got a bright future. People like Sallie are the backbone and musicians are the legs. Legs don't work without a good backbone.

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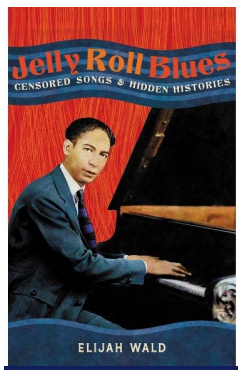
Since they came to us 20 years ago, the benefits of Maier's Bakery insurance have grown. Today, we offer a variety of health insurance options to our employees. We offer a variety of health insurance options to our employees. We offer a variety of health insurance options to our employees.

Sallie A. Bengtson
Corporate Benefits Administrator

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BLUES BOOK CORNER

By Hank Imhof



The BSCP book club read two books since the last newsletter hit the presses. Both books were written by Elijah Wald. "Jelly Roll Blues," our first selection was chosen to investigate piano and the classic blues of the early 1900s. The second book "Escaping the Delta," was yet another look at Robert Johnson. Both books rewarded us with more insight into blues history than their titles might have suggested.

Our December monthly book club was held in-person. We gathered for a covered dish meal, listening to blues records played on a small turntable, some live music provided by club members, and discussion of "Jelly Roll Blues." Carl Sherman played "Little Drummer Boy" by Katherine Kennicott Davis (on dulcimer with recorded accompaniment) and Hank Imhof performed two of Jelly Roll Morton's songs. The first song was "Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor" followed by "Divin' Duck Blues." A fine time was had by all. Thanks to Kathryn Gregoire for hosting the get-together.

We all noted how much we enjoyed Elijah Wald's writing. The next book selection was an easy pick to continue reading Wald's thoughts on Robert Johnson. Our book club has read multiple books about Johnson but after scouting through Wald's book it promised a different approach to the Robert Johnson story.

Before discussing the two books, I feel it's important to share the effects of Wald's background and how that must have influenced his writings. Elijah Wald was born in Cambridge, MA in 1959 and has been a musician since his childhood. At 18, Wald left the US to pursue a music career. Wald played music with various bands around the world for 12 years. He returned to the US to perform solo, as well as with various folk and blues artists, such as legendary band leader Howard Armstrong, Eric Von Schmidt and Dave Van Ronk.

Wald began to write for the Boston

Globe on "roots and world music." He was a collaborator with the Smithsonian Institute's project, "River of Song: A Musical Journey Down the Mississippi." He has a PhD in ethnomusicology and sociolinguistics and won a Grammy in 2002 for liner notes for The Arhoolie Records 40th Anniversary Box: The Journey of Chris Strachwitz. He now lives in the Philadelphia area, plays and lectures about music and music history, and is the author of over a dozen books.

Two of Wald's books have been made into movies. "Dylan Goes Electric" which was about the 1965 Newport Folk Festival when Dylan "plugged in" and in which the newly released movie, "The Complete Unknown" is based. The movie, "Inside Llewyn Davis" was based off his 2005 book, "The Mayor of MacDougal Street," which was about Dave Van Ronk.

This book begins with a warning. Many of the lyrics uncovered by Wald in his search through transcriptions and old recordings were explicitly sexual and racist. It would be contradictory to censor the original lyrics of the material the author discovered. It was the purpose of the book. Be forewarned that he tells it like it was ... and still is. This material, again, I warn, is not for the faint of heart.

This book is not presented in a typical biography format. It's much more. It's a fascinating history of blues and jazz. Utilizing the 1938 Library of Congress recordings of Jelly Roll Morton, Wald was able to learn about Jelly Roll's world through song. The songs tell the stories of life in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast that Ferdinand Joseph Lamothe, aka Jelly Roll Morton, (1890-1941) lived.

The Library of Congress collection contains seven sides of four 78 rpm discs that contain one 59-verse song noted as "The Murder Ballad." Wald provides many insights into this song and uncovers its censored origin.

Each chapter of the book investigates the censorship of songs performed by Jelly Roll and others. "Hesitation Blues,"

"Winding Ball," "Buddy Bolden's Blues," "Mamie's Blues," "Pallet on the Floor," and "The Murder Ballad" are songs familiar to listeners and musicians of blues, ragtime, folk, country, and jazz. What Wald discovers are artists, including Morton, self-censored their lyrics for their audiences in an effort to obtain work and be socially acceptable. Through this process, many of the original lyrics were lost. The through line from the earliest documentation of these songs connects Jelly Roll's work to the covers that are performed and recorded by latter day musicians.

For example, we read, many of us for the first time, about Dink, a "hired" domestic worker at a work camp on the Brazos River Basin in Texas. John Lomax, a famous music historian, recorded Dink singing what is noted as the first twelve bar blues, "Dink's Blues" in 1907. The cylinder it was recorded on was played until it was no longer intelligible. Lomax wrote down lyrics and an account of the story behind the recording he made. Many of these lyrics were too risqué for the public. Wald continued searching to find out more about this story which makes for fascinating reading and links us to Jelly Roll.

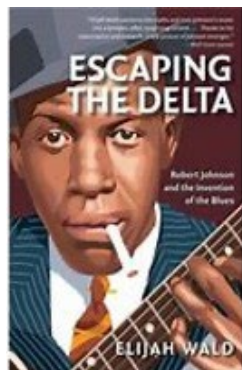
Elijah Wald examines it all with a thoughtful and careful look at whatever facts can be gleaned through research and plain old detective work. He makes thoughts and assumptions from his own experiences and, like a good teacher, reminds you to think for yourself and make your own assumptions. All in all, an insightful read. If you enjoy blues music and learning about blues history, I think you would find this book most interesting.

FYI You Tube now has many Jelly Roll Morton recordings available with more to be released in the next few years.



BLUES BOOK CORNER

By Hank Imhof



Escaping the Delta Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues,

(Harper Collins Publishers – Copyright 2004)

During our February book club Zoom meeting, we discussed *Escaping the Delta*. We have read several books about Robert Johnson since the book club started. We discussed how Wald approached this much researched subject. We viewed two YouTube videos of Elijah Wald. Wald discussed Johnson's guitar technique in "Sweet Home Chicago." This was the first recorded example of the soon-to-be universally used "blues shuffle." The blues shuffle was a copy of a piano rhythm which Johnson implemented on guitar. Wald makes his case as to the profound effect that Robert Johnson had on the blues and the rock and roll genres. The second video was simply Mr. Wald playing his version of Johnson's "Four Until Late." Hank Imhof then played "Love in Vain," another Johnson tune made popular by the Rolling Stones and others. He played the song in open G tuning implementing some bottlenecking for his version.

This book provides a unique view of Robert Johnson and what his life was and what his legacy became. Wald picks Robert Johnson, a personal hero of his, as the centerpiece of an investigation into the music scene of his times. A lot of myth and folk lore surround Johnson. Wald attempts to sort through the stories and myths to find the truth about this great artist. Another question Wald investigates was why Johnson was largely ignored by the

core black audience of his time but yet is celebrated as possibly the most influential blues artist of all time.

In the first section of this book Wald explores the times and experiences that may have shaped Robert Johnson's life (5/8/1911-8/16/1938) and his music. Wald researches the musicians and audiences of that era that Johnson learned from, admired, and used to build his own style and repertoire. Wald attained interviews from Johnson's fellow musicians that gave firsthand account of Johnson's life and personality. Accounts show that Johnson was aware of what his audience preferred. What audiences preferred may not have been the blues, and his performances at the juke joints or dances he played at required a thorough repertoire of popular music. The audiences were mostly black. Also explained was the balance between the recording company's marketing and the listening public's buying power.

Section two was a complete description of Johnson's recordings and how each song was selected and performed. The descriptions included background of who performed the song before Johnson and possibly how Johnson edited his version of that song. Wald's explicit description of Johnson's first time sitting in front of a microphone in 1936 detailing his preparation and execution of that major life event was fascinating. It included assumptions of Johnson's state of mind, possibly while recording each song. It brought out the different genres of music

that Johnson decided to include, besides the Delta blues that he was a master of. This certainly meant that Wald listened to many recordings of blues, popular music, and country to gain an insight into Johnson's mindset.

In Wald's final section he writes about the rediscovery of Robert Johnson, mostly brought on by the 1961 release of some of Robert Johnson's songs that had been stored in the Columbia Records archives by John Hammond. Johnson became a Delta blues legend. The interest came from mostly white audiences. Wald then takes the same approach investigating this era of musicians and audiences after this re-release of Johnson's work. In the late 1940s-50s there was a growing interest in blues and rock 'n roll from artists such as Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf, and others. Wald feels that Johnson's "King of the Delta Blues" release was a tipping point for blues and then rock 'n roll.

Maybe one of the most interesting aspects of this book is that it's a look at music listeners at the start of the century until today and the influence those audiences have on the music. It was the same story in 1910 as it is today.

We concluded during our discussions that Elijah Wald did a comprehensive and seemingly thorough look at blues and music history with the centerpiece being Robert Johnson. He did an excellent job presenting a different view of Robert Johnson's life and his impact on the blues. We enjoyed the book very much.

A Trip Down Memory Lane

By John Drudul

As I sit here reminiscing about past blues jams and the incredible musicians who have passed through the BSCP Jam Portal, one place always comes to mind—the 40 & 8 Club. Looking back and listening to these live performances is a true delight that any blues fan would appreciate. You can experience this musical history yourself by visiting archive.org and searching for "Blues Society of Central PA." There, you'll find months of jam recordings, carefully uploaded by our harmonica-playing friend and world traveler, Bill Hines. Bill has meticulously archived each song from every set, along with photos of the musicians and the whiteboard set lists.

Take a trip down memory lane—visit archive.org and immerse yourself in BSCP history. You won't regret it!

In Case You Missed It!

WINTER SHOW: MONSTER MIKE WELCH WITH GAYLE HARROD BAND

Photos by Kathryn Gregoire



Gayle Harrod Band



Audience



Audience



Audience



Mike Welch



Brooks Milgate



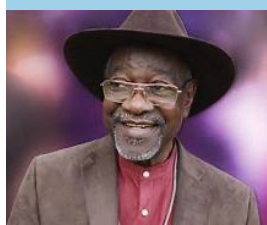
Brad Hallen



Lorne Entress



Dancers/Gayle Harrod



FRANK BEY: All My Dues Are Paid,

FRANK BEY: *All My Dues Are Paid*, the feature documentary film made by Tom and Kathy Dwyer over the course of six years, chronicles Frank's amazing journey during the pinnacle of his performing life. He died peacefully at home at age 74 on June 7, 2020. The film was released in Spring 2022, having already appeared in four major in-production screenings, including Cannes World Film Festival (Winner – Best American Film). Since then, it has received accolades and awards at 13 national and international film festivals, the most recent being the Feature Documentary Grand Prize Winner at the Hollywood Storytellers Film Festival in March 2025.

BSCP was honored to be in the unique position of being the first blues society to present the screening of the internationally award-winning feature documentary Frank Bey:

All My Dues Are Paid. The showing occurred on Sunday, March 16, at Zoetropolis in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, followed by a panel discussion with Producers Tom and Kathy Dwyer and Nola Blue Records President Sallie Bengtson. Discussion continued as the audience reconvened in the lobby for a reception.

The subject of the documentary, Frank Bey, grew up in Georgia where he sang in a gospel quartet with his brother and cousins. At 17, he moved to Philadelphia where he eventually become the driver for Otis Redding and was introduced to the music industry. In 1977 Frank Bey quit singing after a deal had gone wrong with the Godfather of Soul, James Brown.

Forty-two years later, Bey was invited to Nashville by four-time GRAMMY winner Tom Hambridge, Buddy Guy's producer, to record *Back in Business*. It was released on Nola Blue Records and nominated for a Blues Music Award



Tom & Kathy Dwyer

By Kathryn Gregoire

in 2019.

Bey appeared in Central PA at the Lancaster Roots and Blues Festival on February 24, 2019. BSCP presented him for the Spring Show at Champions on April 28, 2019.

In 2021, his follow-up CD, *All My Dues Are Paid*, was nominated for a Blues Music Award, bringing his total lifetime nominations to 7. *All My Dues Are Paid* received a posthumous GRAMMY nomination in 2021. Nola Blue Records released *Peace*, a compilation in tribute to Frank, on January 17, 2025 to wide acclaim and appreciation. Jim White gave us a review of *Peace* (see p. 14). A copy of *Peace* was included in the price of the ticket and can be purchased at link.to/FrankBeyPeace.

Island Jam

By Roger Hammer

This is a short story about a land not so far away. In fact, it's not much of a land at all, since St. John US Virgin Islands (USVI) has an area of only about 20 square miles. The island of St. John is unique in that most of the island is a US national Park, surrounded by beautiful Caribbean beaches. Here I report on a couple of jams held in March 2025.

The annual *Virgin Islands Jam Fest* runs for three days, Thursday through Saturday, and includes more than 15 different bands playing all kinds of music. The venue is the historic Windmill Bar which sits high on a hill on the northwest side of the island on the site of a former sugar refinery. Because of the lure of the beaches and sun, we did not attend this jam for all three days, but I will report here on two of the great bands that we did hear.

Organically Good Trio is a dance and groove band featuring a keyboard player on Hammond organ, technically a portable instrument from the company Nord which produces respectable samples of the venerable wooden Hammond. Of course, it's not the weight of the console that matters; it's the lightness of the player's fingers which was definitely the case here. The trio also features a versatile, funky rhythm and lead guitar player and a rock-steady drummer. I would say they sounded a lot like Booker T and the MG's with a solid groove, cool, flowing Hammond organ sound, and the occasional vocal. The tunes were tightly woven together with endless rhythmic riffs in the bass line solidly held down by the keyboardist's left hand. They got the grooves going and the crowd loved them too.

Windmill Bar is very much an outdoor place and behind the stage is the beautiful Caribbean Ocean. In the photo composite, clockwise you see: VI Jam Fest sign; view from the Windmill livestream cam; *Elephant Proof*; and *Organically Good Trio*.

The second band was a kind of advanced jazz jam ensemble. *Elephant Proof* quartet ventured into what I would call groove fusion, with intricate changes effortlessly knitted together by a very capable set of players with a keyboard player on synthesizer and piano, a singer and guitarist with chops of his own, and a bassist and drummer that

held everything together while endlessly improvising. We loved that band so much for their tightness and originality. They brought some very complicated music with constant change, but these guys played it effortlessly! Lots of fun that was also very well received by the crowd not to mention the awesome outdoor atmosphere in the late afternoon just before sunset.

This particular event was not a Blues festival although last year we did hear some killer Blues there. Stay tuned though...

Part two of our story is a little bit different. It has to do with a place down south of Coral Bay, called Miss Lucy's. Now Miss Lucy's is just a beautiful little seaside bar and grille. The setup is for individuals or small groups to sign up to take their turn with the house band. Most of the jammers did their thing as a solo singer or guitar player except for yours

truly who sat in on bass and vocals. The house band is very capable with a steady drummer and quick to catch on guitarist and keyboard players. What an unforgettable experience to teach the guys a new song (my "Love or Money") and jam with them. Great time in a great place, with a very friendly, good-times vibe. We went there last year, too, when I sat in on bass and vocals, doing Albert King's classic "The Hunter" so it was my second time around the island. May it not be the last.

I would encourage you all to check out the VI Jam Fest, starting with St. Thomas where you fly into, then ferry to St. John, or if you wish, St. Croix, and even the British VI's. Did I mention they have beaches and sun besides music?

So concludes this little chapter about bringing a bit of Blues to the USVI.

Cheers!



BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

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



Frank Bey
PEACE
 Nola Blue Records

Some singers sing. And they do it well. Some pour their heart and soul into their vocals, creating magical musical moments — that's the late Frank Bey.

Who is Frank Bey? He's not exactly been a household word in blues circles. Although his regal vocals and soulful style should have certainly placed him there.

Bey's backstory, like many of his contemporaries, began in gospel music, in his native Millen, Ga. At the age of four, Bey, his brother and two cousins formed "The Rising Sons" and toured the South. At 17, Bey joined the Otis Redding Revue as the opening act for several years. In the early 1970s, Bey formed a funk group, the Moorish Vanguard. A failed record deal and dispute with James Brown subsequently pushed Bey out of the music business for 17 years. He later opened a Philadelphia club called Smith's, where Jeff Monjack and his jazz band were hired. Eventually, Monjack was recommended to put a band together when Bey decided to return to performing in 1996.

Bey's debut album, "Steppin' Out," was released in 1998, but health issues interfered with his performing, and his second album, *Blues In the Pocket*, came in 2007. Three more albums followed between 2013 and 2015: "You Don't Know Nothing," "Soul for Your Blues," and "Not Goin' Away."

That brings us to Bey's Nola Blue recording career — a revival of sorts, for his richly expressive vocals and impeccable singing style. This excellent posthumous collection, "Peace," caps a pair of albums on the label: 2018's "Back In Business," which he certainly was, and 2020's "All My Dues Are Paid," which they certainly were, and which was nominated for a Grammy as Best Traditional Blues Album that year, shortly before Bey's death at age 74.

"Peace" is filled with eleven tracks culled from Bey's career that celebrate both its terrific musicality and Bey's tremendous voice. The opener is Little Milton's "That's What Love Will Make You Do," a tough and bluesy romp with the band crackling all around Bey's deeply soulful vocals — it's a 2015 recording, released

here for the first time. "One Thing Every Day" is an upbeat ode to the joy of trying to make the world a better place. "Midnight and Day" adds a little funk to the mix.

"City Boy," by Keb Mo', is a gorgeous acoustic ballad, full of soul and the Frank Bey spirit, with an ethereal harp solo by Sark Damirjian. "Blues Comes Knockin'" is the first of a handful of songs created by Monjack, and this one deals with the blues directly — "When the blues come knockin', don't you let him in..."

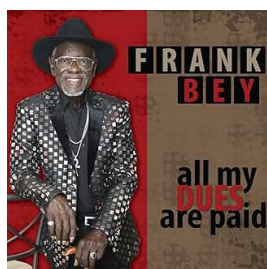
"Walk With Me" is another enthusiastic blues that gives Bey more room to soar. "Bed For My Soul" is an acoustic gem with just Monjack on guitar behind Bey's heartfelt vocals in a country blues throwback: "Got a bed for my body / but got no bed for my soul." "If You Want Me" is a soul-stirring slow blues that simmers with emotion. "Blues in the Pocket" is tough and funky with a raunchy sax solo, then the mood shifts to a dramatic reading of Sam Cooke's anthemic "Change Is Gonna Come." The closer is a Bey favorite, his passionate rendering of John Lennon's "Imagine." It's a fitting emotional finale to this outstanding tribute.

Monjack says of his years with Bey: "For over 25 years show after show, going on stage with Frank Bey was a joy. Frank's connection to whatever that spiritual part of music is, was strong. His singing came straight from the depths of his ancestors and connected to the deepest part of everyone's soul who was there. There were no wrong notes — it was beyond that. Pure music."

Nola Blue president Sallie Bengston says of this album: "Peace was Frank's vision. Peace was Frank's mission. Peace is his legacy. And now, "Peace," the Frank Bey compilation album, will be released on his birthday, January 17, 2025; an enduring tribute to The Southern Gentleman of the Blues."

Give this album a serious listen. Add Frank Bey to your list of great blues singers. Imagine the possibilities.

Peace.



Frank Bey
All My Dues Are Paid
 Nola Blue Records

For review go to BSCPBlues.com
 NEWSLETTERS July-Sept 2020 Issue, p. 12



Mike Farris
The Sounds of Muscle Shoals
 Fame/Malaco Records

From the hard-driving opening bars of "Ease On," with the passionate voice of Mike Farris fronting the soul-soaked sounds of the Muscle Shoals rhythm section, to the world-weary finale of "Sunset Road," Farris's latest album is a glorious non-stop musical journey.

That journey includes nine sharply crafted originals and a pair of gorgeously sung covers: Tom Petty's pensive, slow rocking "Swingin'," and the soulful gospel of the Staple Singers' "Slow Train," with sublime backup vocals.

Elsewhere, Farris lets his deeply felt Southern-soul-filled vocals roam expressively through songs like the thundering "Heavy on the Humble," the delicate thoughtful soul of "Bird in the Rain," the pedal-steel countrified "Bright Lights," and the richly voiced soul stirrers "Her" and the painfully elegant "Before There Was You & I" resonating with echoes of the great Otis Redding.

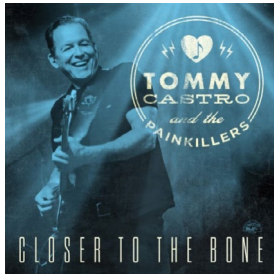
Farris has come a long way musically since his 1990s fronting the rocking Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies. His 2014 album "Shine for All the People" (2014) won a Grammy for Best Roots Gospel album, followed by his thoroughly soulful "Silver & Stone" in 2018.

It feels like this entire album is a kind of return to his roots for Farris. "Ease On," for example, is rich with details of his early years in Franklin County, Tennessee. "We didn't have much, and life always felt like a struggle, and for many years, I found it hard to go back there. But in a way, "Ease On" pulled the curtain back and allowed me to take stock of where I came from and how I got here." The lyrics reflect this sentiment: "It's a long, long journey from where we began."

Mike Farris is criminally under-appreciated as a soulful Southern voice, one that's laid bare in the vibrant tracks of "The Sound of Muscle Shoals." Farris and the roadhouse bravado of his music command your attention and demand your respect.

BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

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



Tommy Castro
Closer to the Bone
 Alligator Records

Tommy Castro has been around the blues block a few times.

He's been making his high energy brand of blues for four decades, covering 17 albums (including this one), thousands of gigs, and he's won ten Blues Music awards, including the B.B. King Entertainer of the Year Award in 2023. And he and his band, the Painkillers, pretty much serve as the house band on the semi-annual Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise.

The Painkillers are at full strength for this new, closer-to-the-blues-bone release, including guitarist Castro on vocals and resonator guitar, Mike Emerson on keyboards, Randy McDonald on bass and vocals, with Bowen Brown on drums. A few high-powered guests include Chris Cain on guitar, Rick Estrin and Billy Branch on harp, Deanna Bogart on sax and vocals, Jim Pugh on keyboards, and the criminally talented Christoffer "Kid" Andersen, on bass, piano, rhythm guitar, organ and upright bass as well as producer at his Greaseland Studios.

"This is a real blues record, the way they would have made them back in the day," Castro says. Almost all the tracks were recorded live in the studio, filled with spontaneous performances that evoke a personal, down-home, juke-joint vibe.

Castro uses the session to pay tribute to some of his influences, including songs by contemporary California blues guitar greats like Johnny Nitro, Ron Thompson and Chris Cain. And he dips back into blues past for songs from Magic Slim, Eddie Taylor, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, Jimmy Nolen and Wynonie Harris. It's an impressive list.

The rollicking original opener, "Can't Catch a Break," is a traditionally themed blues shuffle with Castro full-throatedly bemoaning how "bad luck and trouble is the story of my life," with a stinging guitar solo and fadeout. Nolan's 1956 rocking blues "The Way You Do" follows with Estrin on harp, and Nitro's loping blues, "One More Night" is next — Nitro was another California musician from '70s and '80s, who, like Castro and McDonald, was a member of The Dynatones.

The original "Crazy Woman Blues" is a slow-burning, churning urn of burning blues, with Castro's pleading vocals about being

"a fool for misery" are tangled up in fierce fretwork. A cover of Rick Cain's "Woke Up and Smelled the Coffee" struts in with another crisp guitar solo (they're becoming a feature throughout as Castro shines on every take). A sly cover of Gary Michael Duke and Joe New's lively "Keep Your Dog Inside" features Deanna Bogart sharing the vocals. Emerson adds tasty barrelhouse piano.

Watson's "She Moves Me" is the next cover, an upbeat R&B-flavored track with Bogart on tenor sax. The original "Ain't Worth the Heartache" features Branch swinging hard on harp, leading into the sensuous strains of Ray Charles early hit, "A Fool for You," with another scorching guitar solo. Castro's steamy slide and tough vocals drive Thompson's "Freight Train (Let Me Ride)."

Painkiller bass player McDonald rocks hard on his own composition, "Everywhere I Go," followed by the classic, "Bloodshot Eyes," a country song probably best known for the Wynonie Harris jump blues version. Estrin adds his harp to Taylor's shuffling "Stroll Out West." Everything wraps up with Jim Pugh's organ licks kicking Hole in the Wall," recorded by Magic Slim, and ridden hard by Castro's vocals. It's tough, swelling rhythms punctuate the climax to this terrific blues album.

"Closer to the Bone" is filled with Castro's authentic vocals and steamy guitar licks. His backers are razor sharp and the arrangements are first class. It's music blues that is exactly what it says it is — closer to the bone, but still meaty enough to satisfy the bluestiest appetite. Don't wait till the next blues ship gets into port — enjoy it now.



Tomislav Goluban/Crooked Eye Tommy
Nashville Road
 Overton Music

It's not very often that an old-school Croatian harp player hooks up with a West Coast blues band to create an album, but when they do, what else could it be called but "Nashville Road"?

Croatia-born Tomislav (Tomi) "Little Pigeon" Goluban says he owes his passion for the blues harp to the likes of Sonny Terry and Slim Harpo, which gives him a fine head start on the blues. ("Little Pigeon" just happens to be a translation of his last name.) The Crooked Eye Tommy band roars out of Ventura, Calif., with fierce blues-rock intentions. Together,

they create a masterful blend, pulsating with music from both their worlds, driving hard on "Nashville Road."

The album is filled with original material by Tomi, with an assist from Crooked Eye Tommy (Tommy Marsh) on "There Is A Train," and lyrics by Anamarija Nekić on "Life Is Good." They share the vocals, while Tommy adds guitar to the mix, with Tomi's blues-inspired harp. The smartly crisp backers are Eric Robert on keys, Jasco Duende on guitar, Doug Seibert on bass, and Alphonso Wesby on drums.

The opening instrumental, "Hard Run," lives up to its title, offering a taste of what's to come with Tomi's soaring harp runs kicked along by the crackling Crooked Eye band. Tommy opens the vocal duties on "Rock Dog," chugging along over a percussive beat and wicked harp with an optimistic message: "When the world is dark as night I'll be your light / When everything is wrong I'll sing this rockin' song."

"Up Is Down" opens with a delicious pairing of harp and roadhouse piano before giving Tomi a gritty vocal turn to explain how "You can knock me down but I'll get back up / I been through it all, you know I've had enough."

An elegant, jazzy blend of harp and guitar opens "Bad Choices Make Good Stories," handing the vocals back to Tommy for a philosophical turn: "Sometimes when I'm feeling down / I think about the road I've run / I been bad and I been good / But now I'm doing just what I should."

"Hop Hop Shake" is a throbbing instrumental blues-rock that gives the band a chance to cook up something tasty as an ensemble, featuring a delicious piano break and searing harp lines. "Hard Candy" continues rocking with Marsh letting his sweet tooth do the talking: "Hard drivin' and heavy drinkin' / Hard candy, she's a hard candy / Hard candy from the candy store." Tomi returns to the mic for the bluesy "Keep On Moving On," with sensuous harp: "I hope one day I'll be far away / I don't care what the people say / Cause I'm moving on, I'm moving on."

Tommy offers a relaxed, easy-swinging vocal on "Life Is Good," with a lyrical piano accent and some liquid guitar phrasing: "My days are beautiful, 'cause I'm not alone / And the nights are incredible when you love someone / Yeah life is good." The closer is the ethereal "There Is A Train" with Tommy's haunting vocals accented by his lap steel, Grady Clark's slide guitar, and Bill Gilliam's upright bass. The finale of this musical journey raises a fitting existential question: "Are you gonna live a life of love and spread good cheer? / Or will you choose the road of desolation? / This train gonna take you to heaven or to damnation?"

It's most likely musical heaven, as Tomislav Goluban joins Crooked Eye Tommy with straight-ahead, hard-rocking blues on their international journey to "Nashville Road." You'll want to make sure you're along for this joyous ride.



P. O. Box 60842
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SAVE THE DATES

Spring Show – 4/27/25 – Joanna Connor Band
w/Flatfoot Sam & the Educated Fools opening

Mom I Picnic – 5/25/25

Shakey Joe Kambic/Sherry Salzman Duo
Acoustic Stew featuring Marianna Wright Schaffer
Rose Hudson Blues Band
Erica Everest Blues Band
Skyla Burrell Blues Band
The Mighty Klucks featuring Christina Klucker

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

Fall Show – 9/21/25 – TBA w/ The Jimmy Adler Band opening

BSCP/SFMS Partnership – Acoustic Show – 11/02/25 w/Hank Imhof opening

Christmas Party – 12/14/25 - TBA

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