



Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania  
[www.bscpblues.com](http://www.bscpblues.com)

# BLUES NEWS

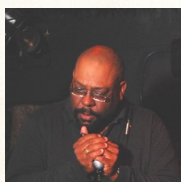
Apr-Jun 2026

# MOM I PICNIC

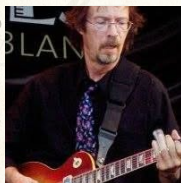
Sunday May 24, 2026



1 pm Tate Lehman & the Blue Chilis



2 pm Jimmy Blue & the Jilted Playboys



3 pm Bill Wasch and 2 Make 3



4 pm Nate Myers & the Aces



5 pm Octavia Blues Band

**Advance \$25 Door \$30**

*Food and beverages included in price*

Mechanicsburg Club Picnic Grounds, 199 Glendale Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA

*Desserts and snacks appreciated*


The Blues Society of Central Pa


presents

# EDEN BRENT




 Greenville, Mississippi native

 4-time Blues Music Award winner and 16-time nominee



 Piano Bar favorite on the LRBC

**SUNDAY APRIL 26, 2026**

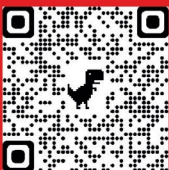
with opening act  
Jimmy Blue and the Jilted Playboys

 Jimmy Blue is a 2012 winner of Tri-State Indie Music Award for Best Blues Band of the Year.



 Advance **\$20** -- Door **\$25**   
Doors Open **2:00 PM** Show Starts **3:00 PM**

Advance tickets available at our weekly jam  
on Thursday nights at Champions or [BSCPblues.com](http://BSCPblues.com)



**CHAMPIONS SPORTS BAR**  
300 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Highspire, PA 17034

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Printed by Get It Now Print

2900 Canby St, Harrisburg, PA

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# From your President...

As winter slowly leaves us, I reflect on how grateful I am to have so much uplifting blues music in Central Pa all year long, with winter shows and weekly jams, thanks to dedicated musicians, Champions staff, and BSCP volunteers.

An extra bonus for winter-worn blues fans came from Rich Ruoff and his hard-working staff who provided weekly Blue Monday at the Lizard Lounge in the Village starting in January and an outstanding Lancaster Roots and Blues Festival at the end of February (p.7). The Village has been sold and its last event was March 1 leaving lots of people hoping that Blue Monday will find a new home, at least by next winter! The good news is that the Festival was a success and the next one is planned for the last weekend in February 2027.

When waking up early this morning, I decided to go on the BSCP Group page and started out my day on an exciting note! BSCP member John "Johnny Never" Dorchester had posted a copy of The Roots Music Report's Top 50 Acoustic Blues Album Chart for the Week of Mar 21, 2026. And the #1 Album is (drum roll) *Black Crow* by Brothers John – Johnny Never and John Colgan-Davis. Johnny Never made the following comments: "We're so delighted!" and "Third week now.... We are absolutely stunned and tickled blue!"

BSCP is thrilled for them but not totally surprised. BSCP is proud to have been the sponsoring affiliate for the entry of *Black Crow* by the Brothers John in the International Blues Challenge (IBC) 2026 Best Self-Produced CD competition in Memphis. We wholeheartedly congratulate and wish them continued success!

The reason I was on Facebook was to look at the most recent post

prepared by Sallie Bengtson, our PR chairperson, for the March 29 show with the Noe` Socha Trio and the opening act lower case blues band. Listening to the YouTube video of Noe` Socha Trio that Sallie shared literally gave me the chills. I continue to be astonished at the incredible music that BSCP brings us. I can always count on our shows to be high quality.

Spring is finally here. Just the thought of all the good shows and festivals coming our way is so exciting. Be sure to view the BSCPblues.com website for current information and we will continue to send out monthly Eblasts so you don't miss any of the wonderful upcoming blues events.

Our next show with multi-award winning pianist and singer Eden Brent and opening act Jimmy Blue and the Jilted Playboys on April 26 is sure to be another good time (p. 5). And then we have the Mom I Picnic with five local blues bands coming up on May 24th for a day of food, friends, family and fun (p.6). We also look forward to attending the Iron Bridge Music Festival at the New Cumberland Borough Park June 12-13. BSCP is an annual sponsor for blues music at the Festival, which will be provided this year by none other than Bobby Gentilo and his band.

Enjoying the blues!



Kathryn Gregoire  
[bluesmunga@gmail.com](mailto: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



## Don Bryant

04-04-42 / 12-26-25

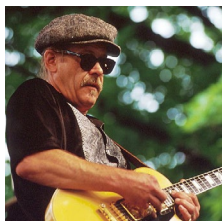
Don Bryant started singing in church at just 5 years old and soon became the lead singer in Willie Mitchell's front band. He became one of the top staff writers at Hi Records, where he met his future wife Ann Peebles, who he'd write for and perform with most of his adult life. After a decades-long break, he performed with The Bo-Keys, including on their 2020 Grammy nominated LP *You Make Me Feel*.



## Dave Riley

03-18-49 / 01-04-26

Dave Riley started playing the guitar at nine years old but didn't get serious about it until he joined his parents in Chicago in 1961. He started to sing gospel with his family, sneaking off to play Motown and hear Howlin' Wolf through club doors. In the 70s Riley found himself playing bass with Muddy Waters, Junior Wells, Buddy Guy, and Howlin' Wolf. In 1996 he started his own band, bringing his son in to play bass, keeping the blues alive within his family.



## James Solberg

06-08-52 / 01-27-26

Like so many great blues guitarists, James Solberg's teacher was the stage and those around him. As a teenager in Chicago he started playing with some local greats, eventually forming the James Solberg Band and touring with Luther Allison, John Lee Hooker, and more. Despite his skill in rock, soul, gospel and more, Solberg always found his way back to the blues.



## "Microwave" Dave Gallaher

04-25-46 / 02-06-26

"Microwave" Dave Gallaher was a staple of his Huntsville, AL community. The first entertainer to receive the Key to the City and long-time host of the "Talkin' the Blues" radio show, Gallaher formed Microwave Dave & the Nukes in 1989, playing for legends Bo Diddley and Jerry "Boogie" McCain. The 2003 Southern Blues Guitarist of the Year/Modern recipient will live on through the Microwave Dave Music Education Foundation, which connects local schoolkids with the music world.



## John P. Hammond

11-13-42 / 02-28-26

1985 Grammy winner, Blues Music Award winner, and Blues Hall of Famer John Hammond was truly a legend in the community. The only artist to have both Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix in his band at the same time, Hammond's collaborations through festivals, studio recordings, and global tours are too numerous to count. His barrelhouse style and acoustic acumen leave an enduring impact on the music world, and he will be sorely missed by any and every blues lover.



## Roy Book Binder

10-05-43 / 03-03-26

Roy Book Binder bought his first guitar at a military base in Italy while deployed with the Navy. When he returned to Queens, he struck up friendships with both Dave Van Ronk and the Reverend Gary Davis, joining the latter on tour. Thus began a long career of touring across America and Europe, sharing the stage with other greats like Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, B.B. King, Doc Watson, and Ray Charles.



## Paul Geremia

04-21-44 / 03-14-26

An accomplished acoustic guitarist, Paul Geremia never recorded with an electric guitar across his 11 albums. The Providence native and RI Music Hall of Fame inductee started playing the harmonica at 12 and passed up on the rock 'n' roll craze to fall in love with the blues in 1959. A staple of his community, Geremia spent his later years enchanting audiences at his local shows.

# SPRING SHOW

By Kathryn Gregoire



## **EDEN BRENT BAND**

Once again BSCP will be bringing a Mississippi native to Central Pennsylvania. Singer-songwriter and pianist Eden Brent combines powerful boogie-woogie with blues and elements of jazz, soul, gospel and pop. She will be accompanied by Logan Bedard on the Drums and Bob Dowell on the bass.

Eden was born into a music loving, guitar-picking family of riverboat captains in the port city of Greenville, home of the oldest blues festival in the world, The Mississippi Delta Blues & Heritage Festival. Her mother was a sharecropper turned fashion model and big band singer. Graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Music from the University of North Texas, Eden was taken under the wing of Abie "Boogaloo" Ames in 1985 for 16 years until his death. He nicknamed her Little Boogaloo. The two were featured in the 1999 documentary, *Boogaloo & Eden: Sustaining the Sound*, and in the 2002 South African production *Forty Days in the Delta*. Eden was also featured in *180 Degrees: Changing Lives in the Mississippi Delta*.

Eden Brent's career was launched in 2006 when she won the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. She is currently nominated for four 2026 Blues Music Awards and recently earned her 4<sup>th</sup> Blues Foundation Award: the 2025 "Pinetop Perkins Piano Player" title. She received the "Holiday Song" award in 2015 at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Independent Music Awards and four additional nominations from them since 2009. She garnered a total of sixteen Blues Music Award nominations, 8 Blues Blast Music Award nominations and 10 Living Blues Awards since 2008.

True to her Southern roots, Eden's voice is reminiscent of Bessie Smith, Memphis Minnie and Aretha Franklin. She released her first album in 2003 with Little Boogaloo

Records and five albums since 2008 with Yellow Dog Records in Memphis, most recently *Getaway Blues* in 2024. She will be releasing her eighth album, *Things Going South*, in 2026. Eden continues living and playing music in Greenville, MS. She enjoys touring and performing in festivals in the U.S. and abroad and is a familiar face aboard the Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise.



## **JIMMY BLUE AND THE JILTED PLAYBOYS**

Lancaster's music scene has a vibrant new band on the scene, with a captivating blend of talent, passion, and raw blues storytelling: *Jimmy Blue and the Jilted Playboys*. This fresh blues outfit is already turning heads with their gritty, heartfelt sound that merges both classic and modern blues vibes.

**Jimmy "Blue" Phipps**, local harp player and vocalist, was born in Philadelphia, PA. Summers were spent soaking in the deep blues at his grandmother's and Aunt Nan's home on Pineland Plantation, Georgia, while the rest of the year he listened to family records in Philadelphia featuring legends like Ray Charles, B.B. King, Little Milton, and Fats Domino.

Jimmy Blue's previous band *Blue Light Special* won the first Tri-State Indie Music Award in 2012. He's shared the stage with greats like Magic Slim, Guitar Shorty, Linsey Alexander, Charlie Love, Bryan Lee, Johnny Winter, and The Nighthawks. After taking time off to raise a family, Jimmy is back and making music again with his new band.

**David Franklin** plays guitar with sharp, emotive riffs perfectly complementing Jimmy Blue's powerful vocals. He was born in Lancaster PA and has been playing guitar for 35 years. His biggest influences are Jimi Hendrix, John Coltrane, Wes Montgomery, Lenny Breau, Joe Pass, Albert King, and Freddie King. He currently teaches music

and gives private lessons at Lancaster Country Day School in Lancaster PA.

**Larry Penner** brings depth to the music with his vintage-inspired, rhythmic layers on the keyboards. Originally a Nebraska farm boy, he studied music at Goshen College and went on to gain an appreciation for the blues while living in Chicago. After a 26 year teaching career at Manheim Township High School, he joined Franklin & Marshall's music and philosophy departments, serving as the academic coordinator. Ready to progress from playing multiple instruments at home to being in the community, Larry is delighted to be a member of the Jilted Playboys band

**Alex Mazzucca** is a bassist who has been part of the Central New Jersey blues scene for years, playing in various bands since his early days as a musician. Known for his deep pocket and song-first approach, his style is rooted in classic blues and soul traditions. A longtime admirer of Donald "Duck" Dunn, Alex gravitates toward simple, powerful bass lines that drive the groove and support the band. His playing reflects a love for feel, tone, and the kind of bass work that makes a band lock in.

**Connor Stoehr** drums with an infectious energy that keeps audiences hooked. A fixture in the local music scene for more than a decade, Stoehr has performed across multiple genres, including with bands such as *Things Behind the Sun*, *Cousin*, and *Blues on the Loose*, as well as in freelance jazz settings. His influences include Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Mitch Mitchell, and Hal Blaine. Having studied with Paul Murr, Aaron Walker, and John Peifer, he brings a deep knowledge of drums to every performance, helping drive the band forward while honoring the blues tradition.

If you're looking for a rocking blues experience, come check out the show—*The Jilted Playboys* have something special in store for you!



# MOM I ANNUAL PICNIC VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

By Kathryn Greigore

The Mom I Picnic will take place Sunday, May 24, at the Mechanicsburg Club picnic grounds, opening at noon. Our Annual Fundraisers make it possible for BSCP to provide blues events in a limited seating venue throughout the year at or below cost.

Central PA bands generously provide blues music from 1–6 pm. The line up this year starts at 1 pm with Tate Lehman & the Blue Chilis, 2 pm - Jimmy Blue & the Jilted Playboys, 3 pm - Bill Wasch and 2 make 3, 4 pm - Nate Myers & the Aces, and 5 pm – Octavia Blues Band.

Mike Easton coordinates the bands and Rock Mill Industries is doing sound for the picnic and Gary “Rocky” Rothrock transports the backline gear back and forth from Champions and manages the stage management as needed.

BSCP provides beverages, chicken and hot dogs with sides. Dessert and snack donations will be appreciated. Food will be ready at 2 pm. To volunteer

to help for an hour or more with grounds clean up, parking, raffle tickets, stage set-up, beverages, or the kitchen, please call Hannah Sherman, Picnic Coordinator, at (443) 617-6693.

Please park on the grass or gravel on the outer parking lot. The inside ground parking is for handicapped, volunteers and musicians. There is NO parking on the grass inside the pavilion grounds.

In the back pavilion, BSCP memberships will be available in plenty of time to use them for the Mississippi Railroad “Members Free” Show in July. Merchandise will also be on display, with several new items available to purchase, including hats, engraved glassware, and t-shirts.

Blues books may be borrowed. To check out a book go to the [BSCPblues.com](http://BSCPblues.com) website, click on EDUCATION-LIBRARY and find a book(s) you would like to read. Please email [bluesmunga@gmail.com](mailto:bluesmunga@gmail.com) and request the book(s),

which will be available for you at the Picnic or the Jam, whichever you prefer.

Advance tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased on the [BSCPblues.com](http://BSCPblues.com) website and at the Thursday Night Blues Jam at Champions. Tickets sold at the entrance: Adults - \$30. School IDs - \$10. Pre-School - free.

BSCP held its first fund-raiser picnic in 1999 at the 40 & 8 Club when Treasurer Kathy Robinson and her crew of volunteers put on a pig roast. The event continues to be held each year, with the exception of 2020, and remains a major supporter of BSCP activities. BSCP called the fundraiser the Treasurer’s Picnic until 2017 when it changed its name to the Mom I Picnic in recognition and appreciation of Virginia Ivanoff, better known as Mom I, who is now retired from the kitchen.

## FLASHBACK with Wes Britton

Nominated for  
Best Soul/Blues Album  
Blues Music Award



### Dave Keller *Le Brea* Tastee Tone Records

Members of the  
Central PA Blues  
Society who came to

the 2025 Christmas party really enjoyed the rockin’ blues of our special guest, Dave Keller! I can tell you Dave really enjoyed being with us and thinks Central PA is blessed with a good crowd of blues enthusiasts!

So, if you were like me and picked up a copy of his new *Le Brea* album, you were likely surprised by how different the music is from the upbeat, kickin’ tunes we all heard live. *Le Brea* is, in fact, a sparse mellow soulful blues

groove in the lineage of Bobby “Blue” Bland, Solomon Burke, Otis Clay, Ronnie Earl, and especially Johnny Rawls with whom Dave has a new collaboration coming out later this year. In Dave’s view, Otis Clay passed the blues mantle on to Johnny and Johnny is passing the torch on to Dave as we all can hear in their tours later in 2026!

Dave describes *Le Brea* as a singer/songwriter’s album, and you can hear touches of folks like Cat Stevens and Van Morrison in very personal songs like the set’s opener, “I Could Fall,” written about his divorce and “When You Land.” You can think of his new music as Americana or folk/blues, a wider canvas than he’s used before. See [DaveKeller.com](http://DaveKeller.com).

Songs like “Your Touch” were inspired by very personal moments as when he woke

up fearing how terrible it would be if he had a break-up with his girlfriend of twelve years. Many songs have been germinating for that long. “Le Brea” means “tar” and David says his new tunes have been pulled up from the tar pits. It’s an intimate set with mellow backing on guitar, upright bass, light drums, and Dave’s occasional guitar and vibe work. You can hear many of Dave’s stories and songs in his in-depth interview with Wes Britton, including his compliments for the Blues Society, on the Jan. 24 edition of online radio’s “Flashback with Wes Britton.” The interview is available as a podcast for download or streaming, along with every FWB show ever aired, at <https://www.artistfirst.com/flashback.htm>.



# In Case You Missed It!

## Winter Show February 22 Photos By Kathryn Gregoire



Cain Band



Greg Rahn



BC Combo



Audience

## Lancaster Roots & Blues Festival February 27-March 1 Photos By Kathryn Gregoire



Buffalo Nichols



Sawyer Frederick



Tony Holiday



Daryl Davis



Village End



Gregoire, McDonald



Curtis Family Play the Last Song at the Village.

## Noe` Socha Trio/ Lower Case Blues March 29 Photos By Kathryn Gregoire



Noe` Socha



Barry Harrison



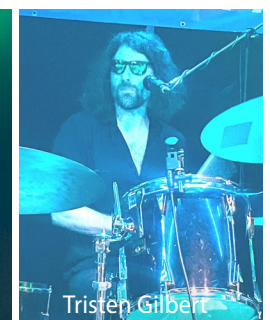
Mike Nunno



B.J. Muntz



Jake Banaszak



Tristen Gilbert



Jennifer and Greg met in high school growing up in Lebanon. He was 16 and she was all of 14. It worked. They've been married for 38 years, raised two sons and spent those years focusing on the boys and supporting the family. Now that the boys are grown they've started to expand their horizons. The elder son, Zack, has his own band, writes originals, plays guitar and has an acoustic solo act. His band, *Spirit of Division*, is currently extending their outreach regionally. The younger son, Aaron, is also a guitar player and drummer, often performing local acoustic shows.

Greg grew up in a large musical family with three older brothers and 22 aunts and uncles. Sunday dinners found them sitting around the table singing, mostly hymns. His grandfather started the Maennerchor (men's choir) in Lebanon. There were always instruments around the house and they all played various instruments growing up. Greg's musical tastes tended to follow his much older brothers' choices: Allman Brothers, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Buffalo Springfield, etc., and country music.

Greg bought his first guitar when he was a high school senior - an Epiphone Les Paul and a Peavey amp - for \$100. Joining the U.S. Navy right out of high school, he basically left his guitar in the dust. Greg never lost the desire to play and in the Fall of 2024, he purchased another guitar and started taking lessons from Andy Alonzo. His goals were to learn the blues and southern rock and to play on stage at the end of the summer. He attended the jam 2-3 times, met his goal, and now aims to sing on stage by the end of the summer.

Jenn's musical journey began when her dad passed his classical guitar on to her at the age of 11. At age 16, when most teenagers are asking for cars,

# MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS: JENNIFER & GREGORY FINK

by Hannah Sherman

Jennifer received a 57 Fender Stratocaster guitar for her birthday. She took lessons and still finds time to play between her work and studies. As to musical tastes, she loves "EVERYTHING" but gravitates to '80's hard rock and her favorite band is *Def Leppard*. She likes Irish and Celtic music including the *Screaming Orphans*, *Albannach*, and *Charlie Zahm*. *Blackberry Smoke* is a favorite for the couple, and they have seen them multiple times. She also enjoys bluegrass, and Jenn's outlook is, "I always find something to like about whatever I listen to." The couple enjoys Nashville and go to concerts there. On their most recent trip to Nashville, Jennifer was fortunate to pick up a Loudon Classical guitar that she had her eye on from a previous trip at the famous Gruhn's guitars.

As far as musical influences go, Greg remembers The Allmans as being the "gateway to everything." He also remembers watching the Blues Brothers movie and thinking, "Who are all these amazing musicians?" While stationed in Chicago off and on from 1985 -1988, the blues world really opened up. Then in Charleston, SC, he saw Matt "Guitar" Murphy and the Allman Brothers for the first time.

After the Navy, Greg started work at Hershey Medical Center as facilities director. He's been there 34 years. Jenn became an LPN in 1996 and an RN in 2002, currently working to care for our veterans at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. She is now working on her Bachelor's degree through Excelsior University in Albany, N.Y.

Alonzo told Greg about BSCP, he checked us out online, showed up a couple of times and hung back wanting to be inconspicuous. He found out that doesn't happen at the jam. He says, "It's hard to be because everyone's so friendly. They wouldn't let me alone and pushed me to play. Very welcoming - it's fun. The players are really good, and they mix and match in a way that sounds great. What's especially nice is how encouraging the veteran players are. They don't let you

hide behind your beginning chops, but they also never make you feel bad - you just don't hear anything negative. It really creates a supportive atmosphere. Where else would someone like me show up with a guitar and play with really good musicians in front of 50-100 people? And the equipment is fantastic - a Hammond! I felt it was important to volunteer for the group. I feel like I owe them something for giving me the chance to play, mistakes and all. When you're part of something like that, you naturally want to give something back."

Being recent members didn't stop Greg and Jenn from stepping up to volunteer as our Merchandise team. They have a wealth of experience, having volunteered for all their boys' sport teams selling merchandise. They walked into our November 2, 2025 show, never having seen the inventory, and just took over like pros. They both now serve on the BSCP Board of Directors, with Greg as Merchandise Committee Chairperson and Jenn as a Member at Large. We look forward to getting to know them better in the future and look forward to hearing what songs Greg will be singing this summer!

Tommy Thomas - Greg and Jennifer are both always very eager to assist in anything that needs done for the Blues Society. Greg is so helpful during the weekly setup and teardown for the Thursday jam sessions and they are a terrific merchandise team. We are fortunate to have both of them as members of our Blues Society family.

George Bressler - I am just getting to know Greg and his lovely wife, Jenn. He was a big help setting up and tearing down for the awesome Chris Cain show. He and Jenn ran the merch table and are now the merchandise team. Greg and I share the same wonderful guitar teacher- the incomparable Andy Alonzo. Greg has great taste in guitars judging by his gorgeous Gibson Les Paul. I just wish every member had the time/love/ambition that Greg and Jen have... SO GREAT to welcome you guys to the BSCP!!!

# A Bucket List Moment in the Mississippi Delta

By Willie Marble, a Lancaster-based Blues musician



Willie Marble

A few years ago, I met friends in Jackson, Mississippi, to experience the history of the Mississippi Delta Blues. We traveled up Route 61, stopping in Indianola to visit BB King's stomping grounds before heading up to Clarksdale to spend a few days soaking in as much of a Blues experience as could be fit into a 48-hour period. There were many highlights, including the Ground Zero bar, the Shack Up Inn and checking out a blues documentary being shown at the Clarksdale Film Festival.

But all of that paled in comparison to a night spent at Red's Lounge, one of the last remaining authentic Mississippi Delta Blues juke joints. Nestled next to a slightly overgrown graveyard, Red's doesn't look like much of anything from the outside and there's nothing fancy on the inside. It's small. The kind of small where upon entry every head in the joint turns to greet you.

This being my first trip into a Mississippi juke joint, I had nothing to compare it to. But it certainly felt authentic - peeling paint on the walls, a worn carpet, tiny stage and a low ceiling paneled with what looked like heavy-duty green plastic garbage bags. Exposed light bulbs hanging from the ceiling, coupled with several neon lights shaped like musical notes cast a hazy, red tinged hue throughout the cramped quarters. The bar menu was simple - bottled beer, water and soda. Cash only.



Red Payden

Red, the proprietor, was serving. It was all that you could imagine in a Mississippi juke joint. I had reached The Promised Land!

I fancy myself as a decent musician. I can't read music and my guitar playing is of the basic blues variety. And I'm not afraid to admit that the only thing better than a three-chord song is a two or one-chord song. Less to remember but more room to groove.

Over the years, I've managed to talk myself onto stages from Memphis to Kansas City to New York City to sit in with various musicians for a few songs. I begin planting the seed with a band member during their breaks. By the end of the night when the crowd thins, most relent and let me sit in for a tune or two.

From the moment I walked into Red's, I knew the path I had to travel. This was a bucket list moment for Willie Marble. The evening's act was perfectly set up for it. A young Blues player who seemed to be cool with people sitting in with him. It was a pretty loose scene.

But it was unlikely that he'd let me play his guitar. And I wasn't packing a saxophone, Mississippi or otherwise. There was, however, a small, simple trap set at the back of the stage. That was my ticket.

There was one problem with my plan. I really can't play a trap set. I can sit in as a percussionist with hand instruments, such as congas and various shakers. With hand percussion

it's easy to add a bit of sound and vibe that that does not get in the way too much. But I've never been able to coordinate my hands with my feet on a drum set.

That wasn't going to stop me.

Compared to the level of selling, convincing and outright bribing with a beer or two that I've had to do in other bars and clubs, this was fairly easy.

"You can play the drums?" he asked.

"Can Willie Marble play the drums? Of course, Willie Marble can play the drums!"

"Okay. You can sit in on the next set."

I can't tell you what song we played. I fell into the groove of a Blues shuffle. I was having the time of my life, enjoying every second of this bucket list moment. I even deluded myself into thinking I was holding my own.

As the crowd cheered our first song, he called out "key of A" and began a second. I thought, "Wow! I did it! I "passed" on the stage at Red's." My Delta Blues juke joint bubble, however, was about to be burst.

About 12 bars into that second song, he yelled, "Hold on! Stop it!" He then turned around, looked me straight in the eye and hissed, "Damn! You can't play the drums! Go sit down!"

For many, that walk of shame from behind the trap set back to a seat at the bar after being summarily and quite publicly kicked off the bandstand would have been humiliating. But not for Willie Marble. He'd just checked off a bucket list item. Playing on the stage of one of the last authentic Blues juke joints in the Mississippi Delta. It would have taken a blow torch to erase the mile wide smile on my face.

I ordered a beer. Red handed me the bottle. I took a deep gulp.

"Doesn't get much better than that, does it?"

From behind his shades, Red simply nodded.

# MOVIE CORNER: The Blues Is Alive And Well In *Sinners*

By Bennett Kelly, music journalist and author of *Sensation Blues* (see BSCP Blues News Oct. 2025 edition, p. 13)



\*This review was originally published by Jersey Shore Jazz and Blues Foundation on July 11, 2025. Thank you, JSJBF! *Sinners* received 2026 Oscars for Best Actor (Michael B. Jordan) Best Original Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Original Score and was a strong contender for Best Picture. *Sinners* made history with the most nominations ever (16). A MUST SEE for every blues fan!\* <https://jsjbf.org/the-blues-is-alive-in-sinners/> (article URL)

Blues music, born of the Mississippi Delta, has sometimes traded in devil mythology, and “*Sinners*” evil is apparent in its opening scene: it’s Sunday morning, October 16, 1932 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, when Sammie Moore limps into his father’s church mid-hymn.

In bloodied, tattered clothes, Sammie wields like a war club the broken neck of an acoustic guitar. (Later we learn it’s a beautiful black and silver resonator, possibly won off Charlie Patton, the lone real-life bluesman we recall getting a shout in the film.)

Pop pleads with him to drop it, and to leave his sinning ways behind, setting up the classic good vs. evil, preacher-bluesman dilemma: “You keep dancing with the devil, one day he’s gonna follow you home,” warns the father.

With the scene set, we cut to sunrise the morning prior, where we find Sammie (played by Miles Caton) intrepid: he’s already picked his cotton quota for

the day, before anyone else has even started, so that he can go juking with the Smokestack twins, his prodigal older cousins (played by Michael B. Jordan) who’ve returned home from Chicago where they learned a few tricks as Capone henchmen.

Smoke and Stack enlist Sammie’s help in rounding up supplies and manpower, and for him to star at their new juke joint this evening, in a barn-sized sawmill on the outskirts, purchased with duffel-bag cash.

Terraplaning through the cinematic countryside, they amble downtown and run into former flame Mary (Hailee Steinfeld), who delivers a line that would make even Robert Johnson blush. Furthering the “Smokestack” homage, they also pick up a Howlin’ Wolf-esque character at the depot to pair with Sammie, and off they go into the juke joint night.

The bustling Clarksdale and train depot scenes in “*Sinners*,” filmed in Louisiana and with several locations enhanced by CGI, don’t typify dust-bowl era imagery. But they aren’t unrealistic – Clarksdale in the Great Depression was a relative oasis for the era – emphasis on relative and for whom – a business thoroughfare getting by on the cotton trade.

Clarksdale’s Delta Avenue, presumably the inspiration for the downtown scenes, has a largely unchanged architecture from then, offering its visitors a unique step back in time. Today, the town has “More characters than Sesame Street,” said Visit Clarksdale director [Bubba O’Keefe](#) to our Danny Coleman. O’Keefe has helped evolve Clarksdale’s downtown from lights-out to international blues destination over the last two decades.

Now Clarksdale is like a blues heaven, however oxymoronic that may be. It’s a gritty Disney World for blues fans with no b.s., only blues. At least that’s how it looks for the weekend trippers like myself. The rest of the time, it still maintains a 40% poverty rate.

“*Sinners*” decade was the pinnacle

of country blues. The genre’s fashions and songs are influential as ever, which the movie keenly illustrates during one musical scene at the Smokestacks’ Club Juke. In 1932, when “*Sinners*” touches down, Robert Johnson (1911-1938) and Son House (1902-1988) were at the height of their powers and prowling all over Mississippi and beyond, especially Johnson.

As was Charley Patton (1891-1934), the first father of the blues, who played a New York City festival in the year of his death. Later in the decade, Johnson, too, was sought out for a New York showing, at Carnegie Hall, with the promoters discovering his untimely death only when they went searching for him.

In 1932, nineteen-year-old McKinley Morganfield, aka Muddy Waters (1913-1983), was playing blues on Clarksdale’s Stovall Plantation. The famed Alan Lomax-Library of Congress recording sessions of him would come in 1941. Hearing his recordings played back helped Muddy know he could do it; he subsequently moved to Chicago in 1943 and became the king of Chicago blues, if not blues everywhere.

Thus 1932 is a sturdy, bluesy year for director Ryan Coogler to have staged “*Sinners*.” But in search of further clues for the specific date, we went combing through the archives. The *Clarksdale Register* newspaper of October 17, 1932, the Monday after the events of the movie take place, offers a very real parallel to the fictional horrors.

The headline describes a manhunt in Senatobia, Mississippi, an hour northeast of Clarksdale, that resulted in the slaying of “3 Negroes” – collateral damage in the search for a man wanted in the killing of a sheriff deputy’s son. “Three negroes were slain and two others probably fatally wounded near here last night,” reads the AP dispatch, “by a posse hunting Jesse Williams, 45, another negro, who officers said shot and killed Deputy Sheriff Walker Williams Sunday afternoon.”

Earlier Sunday, the deputy sheriff was “shot to death when, the state charged,

he sought to arrest the Negro on a minor charge," reads a later AP chronicle.

"Deputy Williams, a son of Sheriff A. C. Williams, was slain with his own gun, the jailer said after he had arrested the negro, William, on a robbery charge."

A later April report described "The tragedy which aroused the entire county, occurred last fall in the new Salem community when Deputy Williams, assisting his father in an investigation of a robbery, went to the home of Jesse Williams to question him in regard to the stealing. While talking to the negro he was fired upon by [Williams' son] Steve with a shotgun. When the young deputy turned to see who was doing the shooting, the older negro snatched his pistol and began firing."

"The jailer said the negro was trailed to a negro church. The church meeting broke up in confusion when the negro appeared there," the jailer continued. "I have just killed a man," the negro Williams was quoted by the jailer as having said. The pastor stopped his sermon and the

congregation fled."

Later that evening is when the "posse pours fire in the structure": "County Jailer J. T. Dixon said that when the posse surrounded the home of a negro, Judge Crawford, shortly before midnight, two shots were fired from the house. The posse members sent several shots in the home, killing Crawford and two of his sons, and wounding Crawford's wife and another son." Bloodhounds were brought in from Clarksdale to search for Jesse Williams. He escaped into Memphis, Tennessee, where he was eventually arrested in December.

Jesse Williams was tried in February and sentenced to death on June 9, 1934, Tate County's "first legal hanging" in twenty-five years. "The Negro spent his last days reading the Bible and singing hymns," reads that final report.

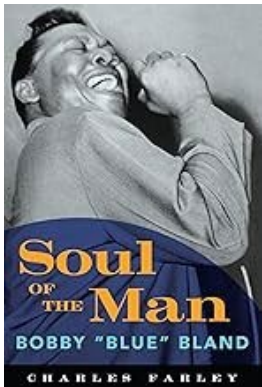
"Sinners" is violent, and there is a Klan presence. The movie's primary villains however are Irish vampires, who serve as a layered allegory for a predatory music industry. The comfort for "Sinners"

viewers is that vampires aren't real. It's just that the *Clarksdale Register's* manhunt lays bare that fake teeth aren't needed to show the harrowing stakes of the times. While not a perfect movie, "Sinners" largely delivers. It forges a vibrant blues world like no other and is a must-see for blues fans.

It's a horror flick, but not one drowned in frivolous frights and jump-scares. Though bloody, it treads more in psychological drama. Musically and aesthetically, it's all there. Miles Caton's blues stand out, with vocals that strike the smooth tones of modern Clarksdale star Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, who scores a cameo himself.

Stay through the credits, and you'll be treated similarly to 2019 Beatles-fiction flick "Yesterday." And if you're a blues fan put off by horror in general, see this one anyway knowing that it won't beat you over the head too badly with a silver hammer, or with a resonator.

Well, be prepared for *some* gore. Those vampires gotta eat, too.



# BLUES BOOK CORNER

By Kathryn Gregoire

## SOUL OF THE MAN: BOBBY "BLUE" BLAND

by Charles Farley

Author Charles Farley structures the content of *Soul of the Man* according to a timeline from 1930 to 2008. He does a remarkable job of telling Bobby "Blue" Bland's life story and simultaneously telling the stories of fellow blues musicians, radio stations, record companies, and the music industry during that time period. Book Club members appreciated Farley's extensive research and the priceless opportunity for learning. They discussed the book over the course of two months.

Member Annunciata Marino states, "I loved the way the author wrote and how the Bobby "Blue" Bland story was historically presented. It was a joy to read, clear and concise. It was just great!"

Bobby "Blue" Bland's story begins

when Robert Calvin Brooks and twin brother Maurice were born Jan 27, 1930, in Rosemark TN. His twin died that spring. Robert met his father when he turned 8 years old and saw him again at age 14. Without having learned to read, he left school in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade so he could work. When in church, he sang gospel and when in the fields, blues. As a teen he changed his last name to Bland in honor of his stepfather. When he was 15 years old, his family moved to Memphis as his Mom wanted a better life for him. There he played music with Rufus Thomas and B.B. King, who became his life-long friend. WDIA gave Bobby "Blue" Bland his start.

After recording with Duke label at age 22, Bobby "Blue" travelled after basic training in Ft. Jackson, SC, to Japan where

he sang with the Army's Special Services Division. He spent his last military stint near Duke headquarters in Houston where he ended up living for 18 years. In 1958 he married Grace Towles in Houston.

Bland's first No. 1 hit "Further On Up the Road" was released in 1958. Joe Medwick Veasey wrote the song, which was purchased by Duke Records owner Don Robey, who took credit as the co-writer. A controversy still exists today over whether or not Johnny Copeland or Don Robey co-wrote the song. In any case, Robey gave it to Bland who needed one more song to finish his first album, *Blues Consolidated*, a Duke Records co-released with Junior Parker in 1958. A seminal Texas shuffle thus became Bland's first No. 1 hit, followed by "Little Boy Blue" also in 1958.

# BLUES BOOK CORNER CONTINUED

Book Club member Hank Imhof sang and played "Further On Up the Road" for us on his iconic 1930 National Triolian named Ruby. It is constructed with flat-cut f-holes, a formed back, and a traditional non-ribbed cover plate. He used the classic T-Bone Walker arrangement, noting that modern blues singers like the Allman Brothers prefer this arrangement over any others.

Bland's first solo album *Cry, Cry, Cry* peaked at number 9. Member Beverly McCormick shared "Cry, Cry, Cry" from her *Two Steps from the Blues* 2001 edition CD with the members. Some of Bobby "Blue" Bland's best sellers were "I Pity the Fool," "I Don't Want No Woman," "I'm Not Ashamed," with mega-hits "Stormy Monday," "Turn On Your Love Light," "Who Will The Next Fool Be?" and "Two-Steps From the Blues," which is considered by many to be the definitive soul-blues song.

Member Hank Imhof sang and played "Stormy Monday" for us on his Huss & Dalton Crossroads acoustic guitar. He plugged it into a Supro tube amplifier to get a more bluesy sound. Member Carl Sherman sang an original "I Loved You Most" written by Carl and Cydney Sherman. He played it on a Taylor 14ce guitar.

Bobby "Blue" Bland's musical influences during the late 50s and early 60s included Tony Bennett, Andy Williams, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Witherspoon, Otis Clay and Nat King Cole.

T-Bone Walker described the Bobby "Blue" Bland Duke/Peacock band as arguably the best big band blues ensemble ever assembled, recording some of the greatest blues hits ever. B.B. King considered his very good friend, Bobby "Blue" Bland to be the best blues singer of the time.

Charles Keil, author of *Urban Blues*, described the foundation of urban blues to emanate from King's and Bland's time in Kansas City and then later on Beale Street and on to Chicago where they perfected the sound. Keil wrote that they were strongly influenced by saxophonist Louis Jordan, who made the blues jump with his upbeat swing music, and T-Bone Walker, who brought the guitar into

prominence.

Bobby "Blue" Bland believed himself to be the creation of band leader Joe Scott. He stated, "I had the voice, but it took somebody to show me how to use it." Scott wrote much of the band's music and carefully selected songs for Bobby "Blue". Being illiterate, Bland was especially challenged in learning songs and he needed short, direct lines. Scott would read him the lines over his ear phones while he recorded, taught Bobby "Blue" phrasing and timing and attended to every detail. Scott also recognized the importance of providing songs that would appeal to R&B's biggest audience: young black women.

The members discussed how instruments became increasingly important during this period of time, with a tug and pull between the guitar and horn sections. Hank Imhof noted how Joe Scott was so gifted in mixing guitar playing with Bobby "Blue" Bland's vocals. Imhof referred to Joe Scott as a "Blues Man Whisperer."

The tumultuous 60's hit the record industry hard, with 60% of the singles records market made up of Beatles records. Bland began to cross-over and was the first blues singer on Dick Clark's show, where he appeared on four occasions.

The 60s were highly productive but low-income years requiring a lot of time on the road, filled with serious drinking. By the end of the decade, Bland's marriage and the Duke/Peacock band broke up and Joe Scott was no longer working with him.

Always one to persevere, Bobby "Blue" and his new wife Marty quit drinking. He carefully selected new band members and Melvin Jackson took over Joe Scott's role, eventually to be replaced by Gerald "Wolf" Stephenson of the Malaco recording studio.

Bobby "Blue" Bland, B.B. King and Albert King started playing together for a month or so each year until Albert's death in 1992. B.B. King and Bobby "Blue" Bland did their first album together in 1974 and it went platinum. He continued to tour regularly with B.B. King, who became the

godfather of Bobby "Blue" Bland's son, Rodd.

After divorcing Marty, Bobby "Blue" Bland reunited with long-time Memphis friend Willie Martin, who took on the role of business manager, which Bobby "Blue" had never had before. They eventually married and were together until his death. In 1976, Willie Martin gave birth to their son, Roderick Cornelius. Willie Martin had a daughter, Patrice, from a previous relationship.

Rodd Bland grew up to be part of the next generation of blues musicians. His 2021 EP was released by the NOLA Blue record label (based in Lancaster, PA). In 2022, Rodd won the Blues Music Award for Best Emerging Artist Album and received the Living Blues annual award for Most Outstanding Musician (Drums).

The last chapter of the book takes place in 2008. Charles Farley gave an overview of Bland's life, how much he had accomplished with his raw talent, stamina and personality and how respected and active he still was in his 70's, touring around the country. Mick Hucknall released a tribute album to Bland in July 2008. Farley noted that "Bobby "Blue" Bland somehow overcame the hardships and the many obstacles—economic, educational, social, and racial—and endured, survived, and prevailed."

Gifted, energetic, and with a strong work ethic, Bobby "Blue" Bland lived on the road playing over 300 shows a year most of his life until his final years when he slowed down to 100 a year. He recorded 63 R&B hits with more than 40 crossing over onto the Pop Charts.

The 1973 NAACP Image Award, 1981 Blues Foundation Hall of Fame, 1992 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 1992 R&B Foundation Pioneer Award, 1997 Lifetime Achievement Award (Grammy), Blues Foundation Soul/Blues Male Artist of the Year Award (seven times running), and the 2008 Beale Street Walk of Fame were among his many significant awards.

Bobby "Blue" Bland died on June 24, 2013, at age 83 of cancer in his son Rodd's arms. The author states that "you reap what you sow and Bobby "Blue" Bland sowed and reaped love and appreciation."

# BSCP PROVIDING EAR PROTECTION AT BLUES JAM

By Kathryn Gregoire

One of the greatest blues treasures in Central PA is the BSCP Thursday Night Blues Jam held from 7pm–10pm at Champions Sports Bar and Grill. BSCP often holds special parties at the Jam for holidays, members birthdays and memorials for musicians. This past year we celebrated B.B. King's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with cake and other desserts and we held a costume contest for Halloween.

In 2024 the Central PA Music Hall of Fame recognized the talent and passion of the musicians, hard work of the volunteers and enthusiasm of the audience by giving BSCP the 2023 Best Jam! Spot Award. The Award is on display in Champions next to the Jam stage.

BSCP greatly appreciates the musicians who take the time to play and share their talents. We are also fortunate that Champions provides us with a very experienced and supportive sound man, Don Intriari. Recently the BSCP Board of Directors has been revisiting the topic of a safe volume level at the Jam. Despite considerable efforts over the years, there are still times when the volume exceeds the desired decibel levels. This can happen even when our sound man completely turns off the volume on the sound board, which he does when the music is too loud.

When Jam Coordinator Gary "Rocky" Rothrock monitors the decibel levels, he has discovered that the highest levels are straight in front of the stage. He recommends that people who are concerned about their hearing sit at the tables on the sides of the room.

The jam musicians have made various efforts to reduce their volume but sometimes things happen, like a guitar player might be unaware that his overdrive pedal is too loud for leads and not balanced with rhythm volume. They are experimenting with different

configuration and positioning of the sound equipment. The most practical way to reduce volume seems to be keeping a limit on the number of musicians playing on stage at the same time.

To deal with those times when volume is excessive and in an effort to ensure the well-being of the musicians and attendees, BSCP is now providing free ear protection in a jar at the sign-up table.

Our Blues Jam has been going strong for 27 years, thanks to the diversified musicians, hard-working Champions staff, gifted sound man, dedicated volunteers and appreciative audience. Rocky has been coordinating the Jam volunteers since 2011, particularly the Jam Hosts and Jam Crew.

The current Jam Hosts list includes Sean Anderson, Lewis Bechtold, George Bressler, Erica Lynn Everest, Tom Lowry, Rocky Rothrock, Marianna Schaffer, John Stover, and Bob Wineland. The Jam Hosts take turns with the responsibility of running the jam. They monitor the signup sheets, match up musicians to play together and schedule 5-6 sets of music during the allotted time of 7-10 pm.

The Jam Crew sets up and takes down the stage equipment. The Jam Crew currently consists of George Bressler, Greg Fink, Tom Lowry, Rocky Rothrock, Jimmy Speck, John Stover, Tom Thomas, and Russell Yohe and others on occasion as needed. Rocky makes sure all of the backline equipment is in good working order, arranges for repairs and makes purchases as needed, sometimes traveling considerable distances to find good buys.

Everyone at the Jam knows the Tip Jar Lady, "Dancing Dot" Grubb, who has been raising money for the Jam since its start at the Lochiel Hotel. Dot makes weekly rounds for collections

which go to keep the jam equipment and instruments up-to-date and well maintained, providing a good working backline for our jammers and visiting bands.

Attendees enjoy a unique media feature with a slide show presentation created, maintained and continuously updated by John "JD" Drudul. Slides include topics such as Upcoming Events, Blues Book Club Readings, Blues News Covers, Jam Hosts Schedule, Jam Guidelines, Membership Information, and Request for Volunteers.

Rocky works closely with Champions manager Jason Naugle and the staff who consistently provide BSCP with good food and drinks, a fun atmosphere and a comfortable setting. Recently BSCP purchased 32 padded folding chairs that are reserved and stored by Champions for our use only at the Jam and our events. Jason liked the chairs so much that he bought 32 more of them for everyone's use so we now have lots of comfortable sturdy seating. Thank you to all who contribute to the Tip Jar. Every donation helps!

Volunteer Buster Grubb can be found weekly welcoming people near the back entrance of Champions. He sets out the BSCP Memberships, advance event tickets sales, event flyers, BSCP newsletters, blues magazines and festival guides. The merchandise team, Greg and Jenn Fink, have started bringing products to the Jam when they can so attendees can make purchases in person. Blues book lovers can order books listed under BSCP Blues Library on BSCPblues.com to pick up at the Jam by emailing bluesmunga@gmail.com.

**NOTE: If you are interested in volunteering at the Jam, please speak with Rocky at the Jam.**

## BSCP CONGRATULATES 2026 CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA MUSIC HALL OF FAME AWARD WINNERS AND NOMINEES

This year's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Central Pennsylvania Music Awards show was held on March 4 at the American Music Theater in Lancaster, PA.

Here are some of the highlights for blues fans. The Blues Music Award went to *Switch Fu* with John Merx (vocals/harmonica), Bill Wasch (vocals/guitar), Eric Slaughter (drums) and Jay Kirssin (bass). Jay Kirssin of *Switch Fu* also received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Others nominated include *The Cadillac Cats*, *Corty Byron*, *Nate Myers & the Aces*, *Quincy Rogers*, and *Gabe Stillman*. The Blues

Rock Music Award went to *Dustin Douglas & the Electric Gentlemen*. Other nominations include *Ben Brandt*, *Colin Alvarez Band*, *Jeremy Edge*, *Sweet Desire*, and *Tate Lehman and the Blue Chilis*.

Erica Lyn Everest, a member of the Blues Society of Central PA Board of Directors, was nominated for the Female Cover Artist Award, which she won in 2025.

The New Artist/Band award went to singer/songwriter and guitarist Zoey Noble. She often writes and plays blues with her father, Bob Noble, of *Blue Voodoo*. Together they perform as *The Nobles*. She recently

launched her own band, *Zoey & the Iconic*.

For a full list of the Central Pennsylvania Music Hall of Fame inductees and award winners, go online to [cpmhof.com](http://cpmhof.com).



Jay Kirssin, Bill Wasch, Eric Slaughter, John Merx

# BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

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



## Peter Veteska & Blues Train *Key of V* Self-Released

Peter Veteska is one of those unsung, hard-working bluesmen who needs much wider recognition than he gets.

He's in the New York Blues Hall of Fame and a member of Jersey Shore Jazz & Blues Foundation, but he and his band, Blues Train, have brought their swinging blues sound up and down the East Coast, creating a series of albums that have defined their career.

The Train has left the station once again with its latest effort, "Key of V," the eighth album since the band formed in 2013.

I'll let Veteska tell the latest album's origin story:

*"When I began working on a new recording project in November 2024, I wasn't sure where it would lead me. I took it one song at a time every month or so, not rushing to a finish line as I had with past albums. "Key of V" is a collection of ten songs – five originals and five covers – ranging from the 40s, 50s and into the 60s.*

*"This time around I opened myself to drawing on sounds and genres that spoke to me, regardless of whether each song I covered or wrote fit neatly into the blues "box." The result is my most personal album to date – one that reflects the variety of musicians and songwriters who have influenced my artistic choices and the band's path over the years."*

Those choices were excellent. They include standards by Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee and blues classics from Big Bill Broonzy and Otis Rush. Veteska's originals are smartly crafted songs with effortless musical backing. The core band for this session includes Veteska on guitar and vocals, Chuck Hearne on bass, Jeff Levine on keys and Alex D'Agnes on drums. Guests are Coo Moe Jhee and Rick Prince on bass, Mikey Junior on harp and Danny Walsh on sax.

Everything gets under way with a deep blue cover of "Checking On My Baby, the Otis Rush version. Veteska's vocal captures its gritty essence, rocked by a driving B3 solo, leading

into a stinging guitar riff. Another blues chestnut follows, a scorching guitar-driven take on Big Bill Broonzy's "Key to the Highway."

"Home of the Broken Hearted" is an original upbeat blues with fiery guitar intro to a message from a broken heart: "Drifting in a sea of sorrow, I'm lost without you." The original rocker "Falling Out of Love Again" spins another lovelorn tale driven by the fierce interplay between Veteska's guitar and Levine's throbbing B3.

The original "Tuning Out the Noise" adds Mikey Junior's harp and Walsh's sax, creating a touch of '50s Memphis soul. That leads into another '50s memory, "Learning the Blues," a Frank Sinatra track from 1955 given an intimate jazzy feel. "Watch the Love Grow" is a rocking original with a relentless groove that sweeps you into the music. "I Did All That I Could" is another original, an easy rocking blues shuffle with a steady rolling guitar at the wheel.

"Walking by Myself" is a Jimmy Rogers tune, updated here with some tasty Levine piano with a solid Veteska vocal. Everything wraps up with a smoothly sung version of Peggy Lee's "I Don't Know Enough About You." Veteska plays acoustic guitar and brings a sophisticated crooner's touch to this 1946 gem.

Peter Veteska & Blues Train have engineered a superb session of blues styles in "Key of V." The songwriting is sharply real, the music is crisp and authentic, and Veteska's versatile vocals shine in the key of V. Get on board the Blues Train for one great musical ride!



## Altered Five Blues Band *Hammer & Chisel* Blind Pig Records

The Altered Five Blues Band is one tough mother for ya!

This powerful Milwaukee-based band creates muscular blues with relentless power and passion, putting them at the forefront of contemporary blues musicians who've

mastered — and channeled — the essence of America's classical music.

Their eighth studio album, "Hammer & Chisel," includes the main Five: Jeff Taylor, vocals; Jeff Schroedl, guitar; Mark Solveson, bass; Steve Huebler, keyboards; Alan Arber, drums; with special guests Jason Ricci, harmonica; Max Abrams, saxophone and Julio Diaz, trumpet. The producer is the gifted and prolific Tom Hambridge, whose presence guarantees that the blues is in the house.

The title is a metaphor for the band's creative process, as they've been "hammering away, scraping and chiseling our way forward, carving out our own corner of the blues" — doing it through their compelling songwriting partnered with music that throbs with superheated authority. Taylor's deep-blue vocals alone are spine-chilling exercises encrusted with grit, delivered with torrential force.

"I Got It Good" roars out of the primeval ether to open the session, fueled by Arber's propulsive drumming, kickass horns and Huebler's churning Hammond behind Taylor's magnificent vocal. This smoldering track leaves you wondering if the band has anything left to say after this scorched-earth take.

Indeed it does!

"Dare Me to Do It" is a scorching slow blues featuring Ricci's furious other-worldly harp and a lilting piano counterpoint. Taylor outdoes himself with a smoldering vocal. "Who Can You Trust" is a driving shuffle with Ricci soaring in the background, followed by "Lotta Love Left in Me," a luxurious slow blues, just right for that belt-buckle polishing slow grind. A smoky late-night piano interlude adds an elegant note.

Arber's percussive beat hammers home the title track, with Taylor's vocal punching out its message: "I'm breakin' all the rules..." The uptempo "Can't Shake It" rocks hard, adding Ricci and a rollicking piano midway. Fierce guitar opens "Headline Blues" and sets the pace throughout for its tough social commentary. The underlying lyrical poignance of "Hell or High Water" finds Taylor in a gorgeous soulful groove.

"My Love Ain't a Lie" turns on the funk for this loving pledge. Honky-tonk piano drives the rollicking vibe of "Crazy One," a simply joyous track. The closer, "The Will of Man," opens with a gospel feel that eases into a soulful exposition filled with optimism. It's a profound finale, both musically and philosophically.

With "Hammer & Chisel," the Altered Five band has put together another outstanding album showcasing their smartly crafted songs, their musical prowess and the vocal majesty of Jeff Taylor.

# BLUES ROADHOUSE BY JIM WHITE

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



## Duke Robillard and his All-Star Band *Blast Off* Nola Blue Records

I am grateful — and old enough — to have seen Duke Robillard perform with his first band, Roomful of Blues, at the legendary Decade club in Pittsburgh. And a few times since.

More than half a century later, I'm grateful that the Duke is still making great music, and that I'm still here to enjoy it.

And Robillard's latest album, "Blast Off" is a thoroughly enjoyable set of the blues, swing and R&B that he's mastered over the years. He's accompanied by his All-Star Band, a crackling good roster including Bruce Bears, keyboards; Marty Ballou, bass; Mark Teixeira, drums and percussion; Doug James and crackling good Mark Earley, sax; Billy Novick, clarinet and Doc Chanonhouse, trumpet. Robillard handles the guitar work, with vocals by Chris Cote.

Robillard is a master of many musical styles, and he celebrates some of them here. The album opens with Cote's muscular vocal on a rousing Floyd Dixon jump blues, "When I Get Lucky," setting the tone for all the great music that follows.

"I'll Be Glad When You're Dead (You Rascal You)" revives a 1930s taste of hot, horn-filled jazz with a New Orleans flavor, first made popular in 1931 by Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway. Robillard makes a rare vocal appearance, swapping vocals with Cote.

"Feel My Cares" is a torchy blues written by Robillard when he was 17. I actually wrote a lot of blues songs when I was around that age," Robillard says, "because I started Roomful right after high school and realized early on that it was important to make my own music." Then "Lowdown" rumbles into view, a hard-driving Tom Waits song, filled with tough rock 'n' roll vibes.

"Play Boy Hop" is an instrumental from the Rocking Brothers, its 1950s spirit flavored by greasy sax lines. "Confusion" is New Orleans R&B by Allen Toussaint; then "Blast Off!" itself launches another Robillard original instrumental featuring Robillard's guitar throughout. "Stand By Me," a churning shuffle by Guitar Slim, gets a rugged blues shouter treatment from Cote, complete with swampy sax.

"The King" is a swinging Count Basie instrumental, leading into Cote at his most achingly soulful vocal on "Warm and Tender Love,"

a Percy Sledge classic. "Galactic Grease," another original instrumental, adds a pulsating organ and stinging guitar that speaks highly of Booker T. & the MGs. "That was a nod to Steve Cropper, of course," Robillard says. "Look a There Look a There" is a classic post-war Chicago blues from the influential slide guitar wizard Tampa Red that swings the session to a glorious close behind Cote's rollicking vocal.

Duke Robillard has made much great music over the course his long and illustrious career, all of it pure enjoyment. "Blast Off!" is saying that even the sky may not be his limit.

**I should note** that with this new album, Robillard has ended his long-standing relationship with Stony Plain Records in Canada. Instead, he's blasted off into a new career with Nola Blue Records, a Lancaster, Pa., blues-centric label that seems determined to keep the blues alive.



## Lucky Losers *Arrival* MoMojo Records

I'm a little behind on a few fine new releases from the last couple of months — no excuses, just late. Rest assured that those responsible have been placed on a severely reduced libation ration.

One of the best of those albums, reaching way back to its long-ago release date of Nov. 7, is "Arrival," from the dynamic West Coast blues duo, The Lucky Losers.

The San Francisco-based Losers, a five-piece, six-time Independent Blues Award-winner, are more-than-lucky winners here, fronted by the soulful vocals of Cathy Lemons and the harmonica wizardry of Phil Berkowitz, who shares in their wide-ranging, always spot-on, vocal stylings. "Arrival" is the group's sixth album, and their debut on the MoMojo label (a division of Nola Blue, Inc.), home to a growing collection of vital, independent roots artists.

Of these 11 original songs, five were written by Lemons (co-writers: Kid Andersen and Chris Burns) and five by Berkowitz (co-writers: Danny Caron and Chris Burns). The criminally talented Andersen also produced and engineered this sparkling session.

Adding to the musical magic are Doug James on tenor sax, Mike Rinta on trombone and John Halbieb on trumpet, Burns and Andersen on keys, Simon Govan Smith on guitars, Edgar San Gabriel on bass, and Jon Otis on

drums.

Lemons says: "Arrival" is our breakthrough album, and the most personal music I've ever written. Out of the 11 tracks, I contributed five songs that pushed me to take real risks. For example, 'I Believe Her (Because I Am Her)' confronts childhood sexual abuse. The line, 'I believe her, because I am her—who don't believe me, my own mother,' comes directly from my life. "Pig Iron Tough" reflects on the 'made-of-steel' resilience it takes to survive touring. That song is rooted in my childhood when I moved 15 times before the age of 17; 'got no friends, always new in town, until you move again.'

Berkowitz adds: "Looking back, I wasn't supposed to be a musician. I grew up in a not so typically dysfunctional 60s/70s suburban household in New Jersey. My mother died when I was ten years old. I was sent off to camp for nine consecutive summers, diagnosed with ADD HD, long before the term became a household word, and sent to therapists. I guess the song 'Misfit Kids' comes straight from my life. 'Sunday Stroller' is probably my best work because people instantly respond to it . . . . When I wrote these songs with Danny Caron and Chris Burns, these stories came so naturally. These songs are personal reflections and characters I created. "Arrival" has brought my songwriting full circle."

All of that finely crafted personal songwriting sparks an album rich with human experience, enthusiastically delivered by Lemons and Berkowitz, flowing effortlessly through a variety of genres from folk to funk.

It all kicks off with some of that funky feeling from Lemons in "S-C-A-M," a contemporary warning to the unsuspecting and a special shoutout to Elon Musk, all kicked along by a furious horn section. "Sunday Stroller" finds Berkowitz rocking a bluesy message about a "big high roller" with his vocals and sharp harp.

An album highlight is Lemons' rich, soulful vocal on "Pull on The Rope," with its deep gospel feel. "Play It From the Heart" is a sweet up tempo ballad with Berkowitz and Lemons blending vocals with love and a gently swinging vibe. The sultry blues of Lemons' "I Believe Her (Because I Am Her)"—delivers her angry tale of the sexual abuse of young women, with mournful harp embellishment by Berkowitz. "Sorry Brother" highlights Berkowitz on harp, and "My Father's Son" is another thoughtful personal tale from Berkowitz.

"Pig Iron Tough" brings back a funky beat pairing Lemons' soaring vocals with Berkowitz's horn-like harp, weaving a message of personal toughness. "Don't Let It Slip Away" is a horn-fueled R&B slow dancer with Lemons' torchy vocal polishing this soulful gem of a song. Berkowitz's autobiographical "Misfit Kids" is a bouncy tale of life emerging for just that — a misfit kid.

"Ain't The Marrying Kind" is the whimsical countrified closer, a Berkowitz-Lemons penned duet with Andersen on acoustic guitar and Berkowitz on harp. It adds a sweet touch of front porch intimacy to this jaunty finale.

The Lucky Losers are indeed arriving as talented winners in "Arrival," with their thoughtful personal songwriting, engaging vocals and infectious musicality. Put them on your list for the new year!



P. O. Box 60842  
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SAVE  
THE  
DATES

Spring Show – 4/26/26

Eden Brent Band w/Jimmy Blue & the Jilted Playboys opening

Mom I Picnic – 5/24/26

Tate Lehman & the Blue Chilis, Jimmy Blue & the Jilted Playboys, Bill Wasch and 2  
Make 3 Band, Nate Myers & the Aces, Octavia Blues Band

Mississippi Railroad – TBA

August Show – 8/23/26

Rick Estrin & the Night Cats, Susquehanna Blues All Stars opening

Fall Show – 9/20/26

Andrew Duncanson & Take A Ride featuring Michael Peloquin,  
Skyla Burrell Blues Band opening

Christmas Party – 12/13/26

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