



**The Philadelphia Blues Society's**  
**Quarterly Newsletter**  
**June to September**  
**2025**

**Intown Innerview with Mikey Junior**



**CD Reviews**

**Blues Articles**

**Book Club Corner**

**In Memoriam**

**See Where Your Favorite Member Blues Bands Are Playing...and more!**

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## Letter From the Editor

Welcome to the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the Philadelphia Blues Society Quarterly Newsletter. This issue will feature an Intown Innerview (not a typo) with Mikey Junior, two great articles written by two of our women members, Kathryn Gregorie handles the Blues Book Club Corner, plus CD reviews from Deb Callahan and Stephen Shanahan. We remember those that have gone before us on the, “In Memoriam” page, check out the things YOU might have missed photo page, showcasing one of our events at our home venue, Jamey’s House of Music in Lansdowne, PA.

The Philadelphia Blues Society serves the greater Philadelphia region in support of Blues Music and the men and women who love it – through performance, promotion, preservation and community education and events like our fundraiser to help a blues-brother in need.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Philadelphia Blues Society Blues Festival is on!!**



Saturday, October 11, 2025 at Temple University’s Ambler Campus from 11am to 6pm, The Philadelphia Blues Society presents our 1<sup>st</sup> Blues Festival for the blues community. Our headliner for the festival is (King) Solomon Hicks, followed by the Mikey Junior Band, Billy the Kid & The Regulators, Erin Harpe and Jim Countryman, The Philly Blues Kings with Clarence Spady, and Danielle Miaglia will be opening the show. For more information or to purchase festival tickets, the web address is: [www.philadelphiabluesociety.org](http://www.philadelphiabluesociety.org)

Don’t forget that P.B.S. members always get 10% off any ticket for any P.B.S. sponsored show like the Philadelphia Blues Society’s 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday presents event where they feature a P.B.S. member blues artist or band, or a regional or national touring artist or band. They had Dr. Harmonica and Rocket 88 in April, and Tony Holiday in March.

Greg Gaughan  
Managing Editor





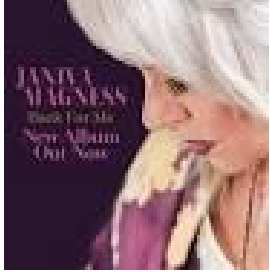
Janiva Magness *Back For Me*

Release date March 28, 2025

By: Deb Callahan

Back For Me is Janiva Magness' 17th album and 5th on her current record label Blue Elan Records. Back for Me was produced by her longtime friend, producer-collaborator David Darling and includes 10 tracks.

Janiva began writing songs later in her career, starting with her album Original, but for this outing, she and Darling handpicked 10 songs that are lesser-known gems written by well-known artists (Bill Withers, Ray LaMontagne, Allen Toussaint, Doyle Bramhall II, Tracy Nelson, Irma Thomas).



Magness interprets and inhabits these songs fully and the result is a deeply emotional and dynamic album. The themes and messages of the album include love lost, regret, acceptance, resilience, and hard-earned wisdom.

The core musicians on the album include drummer W.F. Quinn Smith and bassist Ian Walker, with keyboardists Sasha Smith and Phil Parlapiano, guitarists John Schroeder and Robert "Chalo" Ortiz, Nick Maybury and blues harp player TJ Norton also appearing on various songs. Special guest guitarists Joe Bonamassa, Sue Foley and Jesse Dayton are also featured along with Darling on one song apiece.

The album kicks off with **Masterpiece** an upbeat, groove-based tune written by Darling and featuring Joe Bonamassa with his signature fiery guitar work. Magness' vocals convey strength and an edge of anger that she has been through a lot, is aware of her mistakes and is ready to move on. "I've made a lot of mistakes, but you might be my masterpiece".

Next up is Bill Withers's **The Same Love That Made Me Laugh** illuminating the duality of joy and pain in love sometimes. Smith lays down a wonderful foundation on the drums as the R&B tune grooves and simmers and Parlapiano showcases his chops on the Hammond B3. Magness' vocals are husky, gritty and expressive here.

**November**, written by Doyle Bramhall II and Renee Zellweger is a beautiful, haunting song with the theme of regret and the wish to go back in time to change things and to be able to convey how much a loved one is appreciated in her life. The production on this one is sparse and stripped down compared to Bramhall's own version which is busier and horn laden. This allows Magness' voice and the story to take center stage. She flexes into her higher range on this one with great effect.

**Holes**, another album highlight, written by Julianne Marie Guidi is a blues-rock burner featuring Canadian guitarist Sue Foley. There's an ominous intensity to this song with some echo and delay on the guitar and vocals creating an eerie effect in the middle of the tune. Magness vocals are insistent that the protagonist "stop digging them holes" and getting stuck in the same dead-end patterns. She informs on the bridge "that the thing you'll find is a bed made out of your bones". Foley's guitar work is biting with an attack that is perfect for this song as she duels with Schroeder on guitar throughout the song.

**I Was Good To You Baby**, written by New Orleans artists Buddy Flett and David Egan has a gospel-tinged groove with the bridge shifting into a more upbeat piano feel. This tune finds Magness clearly standing up for herself and challenging an old lover letting him know how good she was to him despite the ways he was unkind to her. She lets

him know she's leaving and says bitingly that "you're so smart, you don't know nothing".

**You Can Bring Me Flowers** written by Ray LaMontagne has a stripped-down back porch vibe with the use of percussion instruments. Here Magness is coming to terms with a lover who has moved on to another and she conveys some sarcasm as she says "you can bring me flowers babe, when I'm dead and gone"

**Down So Low** by Tracy Nelson is a straight up gospel number with wonderful piano work by Sasha Smith and featuring tasty guitar work from guitarist Robert "Chalo" Ortiz. Here Magness sings of the deep pain of losing love, acknowledging her role in the demise of the relationship and the struggle to ever find a love like this again. Magness' vocals convey aching loss and testifies at the end that "a woman can't be a woman unless she's fulfilled."

**Do I Need You** written by Anne Peebles et al. has an upbeat R&B vibe about a woman who questions whether she's ready for love after a life of sacrifice.

The album closes out with **Hittin on Nothin**, an Allen Toussaint song (under the pseudonym of Naomi Neville, his mother's name) made known by The Soul Queen of New Orleans, Irma Thomas. It features Blue Elan label mate Jesse Dayton on guitar and rollicking piano. The tune has a feel-good swagger with Magness conveying the playfulness and sass of a woman who knows what she wants.

For me, the real masterpiece on the album is the 2nd tune and title track written by Casey Lee Hurt, Eric Schultz, and Kelly Keith Brenden entitled **Back For Me**. This slow blues burner starts off with sparse bluesy guitar as the band builds and swells beautifully at several points creating just the right amount of tension and release for the song. Magness' vocals are laced with regret, resignation and vulnerability and she holds nothing back when she launches into the chorus and the bridge and asks her partner to come back for her. Maybury's guitar snakes around her vocals providing just the right support for her stunning vocal performance.

Magness has found songs that allow her to speak from the point of a view of a woman who has been through a lot, has come to peace with most of it and doesn't apologize for who she has become. Her voice is powerful and vulnerable with an edge of weariness at times and Darling's R production fits the songs and Magness perfectly.

Eric Johanson, *Live in Mississippi*

Released March 21, 2025

By Steve Shanahan

Eric Johanson was born and raised in Alexandria, Louisiana. He played in local blues bands before traveling regularly to New Orleans to play. Eventually, Eric moved to New Orleans and graduated from the University of New Orleans and became part of the local music scene.

In 2005, Eric lost everything in Hurricane Katrina. He left the U.S. in 2006 for New Zealand for 4 years. He returned in 2010 and became a session musician, playing for a variety of artists, including the Neville Brothers. In 2017, he released his first album, "Burn it Down," under Tab Benoit's Whiskey Bayou record label.



Johanson has had four albums in the Billboard Top Blues Album chart and enjoyed a collaboration with The North Mississippi Allstars – pretty good company, eh?

Eric’s new album “Live in Mississippi” was recorded live at the infamous Ground Zero blues club in Biloxi, Mississippi. The album contains ten songs for 47 minutes of live blues grooves. The recording is clean with minimal, if any effects. So, the guitars shimmer with the percussion and bass pumping along as if you were sitting in front of the band. Stylistically, there are plenty of good blues songs on this album. “Nowhere to Go,” a one-four-five rocker, opens the album. “Yellow Moon” includes some modal jazz buried in the solo. “Just Like New” has Eric working the slide guitar in his ode to starting over again. “Hard Time Killing Floor Blues” is a solo version highlighting Johanson’s vocal talents leading into the slow blues, “Changes in the Universe”.

Growing up with heavy metal, Eric slashes his way through intros such as in the last track “Don’t Hold Back. The listener will get its share of lighting single note runs, screaming string bends over-driven to perfection and polished off with a Leslie warble.

The album has Eric Johanson, (Guitar, Vocals), Terry Scott, Jr (Drums), and Will Repholz (Bass). This album is a more modern blues album that honors the time-tested trio. The musicianship is top-notch and there is plenty of variety and ear candy to keep your attention.

Tommy Castro and the Painkillers *Closer to the Bone*  
Released February 7, 2025

**By Steve Shanahan**

Closer to the Bone is a tour de force collection of songs by the great Tommy Castro of San Jose, CA. Tommy has been active since the mid 1990’s, He just celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 15th.

The album has fourteen songs and 51 minutes of pure listening Blues pleasure. “Closer to the Bone” is a terrific way to introduce yourself to Tommy Castro and the Painkillers if you are not familiar with their Blues. Listen closely and you will hear melodic, rhythmic, and lyrical nods to the past.

As Tommy and the Painkillers take you through the familiar journey of lost love, new love and letting one get away as in “Woke Up and Smelled the Coffee” (featuring Kid Andersen), the listener will hear why Tommy Castro and the Painkillers are still one of the best Blues bands on the scene today.

If you follow Tommy Castro, you know that many of his albums have guests and featured artists. The “Painkillers” consist of Randy McDonald (bass), Bowen Brown (Drums) and Mike Emerson (Keyboards), and this album features Rick Estrin (Hamonica), Billy Branch (Hamonica), Chris Cain (Piano), Jim Pugh (Piano, Organ), James and Dwayne Morgan (Backing Vocals) with fiancée Deanna Bogart (Vocal, Tenor Sax), Christoffer Kid Andersen (Rhythm Guitar, Fender & Upright Bass, Piano, Organ), June Core (Drums), Scott Jensen (Trumpet), Mike Rinta (Trombone), Jack Sanford (Baritone Sax), and Lisa Andersen is the female voice on Tracks 3 and 7. Kid Andersen produced and mixed this album at his Greaseland Studios in San Jose, CA. Part of the magic of Tommy’s latest album is the album's production, and it is perfect. The listener can hear the instrumentation, and vocals, clearly in the mix.

I have seen Tommy Castro and the Painkillers about two dozen times on the Blues Cruises. Full disclosure, I got to know Randy McDonald a bit at the jams and found the



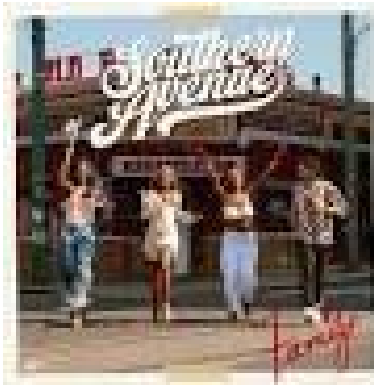
Painkillers to be very cool, good people. That said, this album is worth taking a listen, and to me, is at the top of Tommy Castro’s 15 plus releases to date.

Southern Avenue album *Family*

Release date April 25, 2025

**By: Deb Callahan**

*Family* is Southern Avenue’s 4th album and their first release on the Alligator Records recording label. The band consists of 3 sisters, Tierinii Jackson as lead vocalist/songwriter, Tikyra “TK” Jackson on drums/vocals/songwriting, Ava Jackson on violin/percussion/vocalist/songwriting and Ori Naftaly, who is married to Tierinii, on guitar/songwriting. The three church-raised sisters grew up in Memphis, TN listening only to gospel music and honing their warm, sisterly harmonies.



Guitarist Naftaly was born and raised in Israel and his love for blues and soul music brought him to the US in 2013 to participate in the International Blues Competition in Memphis with his band at the time. He toured with his band for a few years before meeting Tierinii in Memphis and in 2015,

they formed Southern Avenue. The band has been nominated for the Blues Music Award Band of the Year in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

*Family* was recorded in Memphis, TN at the famous Royal Studios (Al Green, Ann Peebles) and produced by Grammy winner John Burk (Ray Charles, George Benson, Melissa Etheridge) and mixed by multi-Grammy-winning producer and engineer Boo Mitchell (Snoop Dog, Bobby Rush, Cedric Burnside).

Joining the 4 family members on the album are long time bassist Blake Rhea (who passed away in 2024 and plays on all but 4 tracks), Luther Dickenson on bass and Jeremy Powell on keys. Naftaly states that “the album is the story of how we found each other, held on through the highs and the lows and built something stronger than we ever imagined.”

Tierinii explains the music is “an unbreakable bond between the musicians themselves as well as their growing legion of fans.” “Our music is our expression of life. Our songs reflect our thoughts, feelings, baring our souls”.

This fourteen-track album is a blend of blues, soul, gospel, R&B, funk and roots music that reflects the musical melding pot of Memphis. The songs were written by the band as a collective with contributions from Luther Dickenson on the songs Sisters and We Are.

The overall energy of this album is upbeat, positive, hopeful, joyful, espouses connection and love and is a celebration of family. Lead singer Tierinii’s vocals have a strong R&B, soul, gospel flavor and her natural, supple, voice has an expansive range, a warm vibrato and organic vocal runs. She digs into the grit at times to add extra fire when needed.

Naftaly’s guitar is warm, melodic and versatile throughout the album and anchors the music in the blues. His guitar tone moves easily from clean on the soul and funk tracks to a grittier sound on some of the slide laden blues tracks. His sound is robust but never overpowers the gifts of the rest of

the family. The sisters work magic with their otherworldly harmonies and creative ad libs at times weaving around each other.

TK lays down a solid drum groove on the tracks and Ava provides harmonies and violin on several tracks. The production is rock solid and showcases the talents of this group perfectly.

The opening track, **Long is The Road** is an upbeat and infectious tune. Lyrics such as “heavy is the heart but the beat ain’t stopping. He hit rock bottom but he keeps on rockin. and “he put it in a song and turned water to wine” reflect the positive, won’t give up attitude of this group.

Naftaly’s guitar gives the song a bluesey feel and he jams out at the end while the sisters demonstrate their gospel roots in the outro.

**Upside** is a radio friendly tune that grooves and simmers with a wise message “don’t waste your time on things you can’t change” and the chorus “every day’s a new day, find me on the upside”, which begs to be sung along. Naftaly kicks it into high gear with his guitar solo as the dynamics get more intense and the Jackson sisters nail the ending on the outro as they repeat “on, on, on the upside, on, on, on the upside”.

**Found a Friend** is a gospel fueled church foot stomper with a tambourine-based groove and a slide guitar riff driving the chugging rhythm. Ava Jackson shines with her violin solo and the break down-build back up creates effective dynamics in the song. The lyrics focus on the power of friendship and togetherness with lyrics “We found our strength in each other and as long as we’re together can’t nobody touch us” and “We heal each other with love and harmony.”

**So Much Love** gives an easy, relaxed R&B feel with a solid groove from TK on the drums, a bassline by Rhea that is soulful and an airy guitar solo from Naftaly that works well for the song. The vocals are relaxed and sincere with lyrics such as “Hey darling, ain’t no sense in letting hard times hold you down. There’s so much love to go around”.

The album boasts 3 interlude songs that are under 1 minute each. *Family* is a 41 second song with just the Jackson sister’s voices and a slide guitar. The lyrics tell the story of their destiny, meeting at a crossroads and finding all they need then our band became a family.

**Kept On Moving On** is 39 seconds and gives the message “together we came kept on moving on, we remained strong”. **Believe** is 48 seconds and the vocals keep repeating “I believe.”

**Late Night Get Down** starts off with a rootsy slide guitar and is a fun, rockin’, upbeat tune about working a long night as a busking performer and then being asked to continue a music/dance party into a late night get down. Dickenson and TK create a create a solid groove on the bass drums and Powell demonstrate some nice organ work here.

**Rum Boogie** has a percussive rhythmic beat, a guitar riff that the Jackson sisters sing along with, rollicking piano by Powell and a fun party vibe. The song tells the story of them playing in the famed Memphis club as they are starting to make it and the vibe of the club and patrons as they perform “all night long” There’s a loose ad lib feel with the sisters joking and laughing, adding to the late-night party vibe and Tierinii showcases some impressive vocal runs at the end.

**Gotta Keep the Love** has a 70’s funk guitar groove reminiscent of Marvin Gaye’s “Inner City Blues”. The story tells of a person who is “telling lies and you’re the victim, every story told is fiction”. Tierinii lets him know “I see the light in your eyes, here’s a chance to make it right” and encouraging him to keep the love.

**Sisters** features slide guitar, driving drum beat and percussion with a theme of the Jackson sisters all supporting each other with a mantra of “we are love, we move mountains for each other.”

**Back to What Feels Right** is a funk tune that allows Powell to shine on the clavinet and Rhodes. There’s a theme of cutting loose and feeling free with lyrics “free up your mind, your move, do what you need, get down, get up, new groove, new you, new feel”

**Flying** has a heavy, gritty delta guitar sound and tells a more personal story about Tierinii needing to fly and that unlike their momma, who has a fear of flying and a generation of curses, she is willing to risk and take chances to do this. She sings in the chorus “If I die, at least I’ll die flying”. Tierinii belts out and lets loose with her vocals in one of the most expressive tunes for her vocally. During the climax of the tune, she sings “honestly it feels good” and “fear won’t define any part of me and here I am defying gravity”.

**We Are** closes out the album with a marching beat driven, rootsy guitar tune that reinforces their positive message “This is our story, it’s tried and it’s true. We are love, we are peace, we are hope, we are healing, we are the future. We see ourselves when we see you and you are love, etc” It’s a message that is much needed in our world and let’s hope indeed they are the future.

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THE PHILADELPHIA BLUES SOCIETY PRESENTS 1<sup>ST</sup> THURSDAY OF THE MONTH AT JAMEY’S

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**\*June 5<sup>th</sup>:** Pamela Smith (\$20)

**\*July 3<sup>rd</sup>:** The Mark Margolies Band (\$20)

**\*August 7<sup>th</sup>:** The Empty Belly Blues Band w/Alabama Sam (\$20)

**\*September 4<sup>th</sup>:** Khadijah Renee (\$20)

**Jamey’s – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave., Lansdowne, PA 19050**



## NOT BORN INTO THE BLUES

by Zita Jackson

I didn't grow up listening to the Blues. As a matter of fact, I hadn't even heard of many of the pioneers in this genre of music. Nevertheless, I have grown to love the sound, the feeling, and the emotion of this music to the point where I could live and breathe it all day long.

When thinking back on how I could have developed such a love for the "blues", I'm sometimes left scratching my head, because I certainly wasn't born into it.

Let me explain. . .

Before moving to the East Coast, I lived in the midwestern state of Oklahoma, or as some would say, the Bible Belt. My father was a fire and brimstone Baptist minister who raised us up in the church, where we attended services almost every day of the week.

Other than going to school, that was pretty much the extent of my childhood activities.

When it came to music, gospel music was allowed in the home, but not any other type of music—especially not the blues, or "that music" as my father would say. Neither were we allowed to listen to any music that was coming out of the "juke joints", or secular music from the radio. It was not because my father did not love music himself, as he had a beautiful baritone voice. He would begin his sermon by singing a song and end it with a song as well.

Although my father could be very strict about this, my mother, who had told us of her love for music and dancing, would secretly let us listen to some of the music that everyone else was listening to on the radio at that time—whenever he wasn't around.

This music included a healthy dose of country music, which stands to reason because of the region where we lived, and a variety of music other than country. The Beatles had just burst onto the scene in the United States, and Motown was flush with new talents like Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, the Temptations, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin, just to name a few. Also sprinkled into that mix was Ray Charles, Nat King Cole (my mom's favorite), and B.B. King.

My siblings and I would sing and dance to these songs and have the greatest of times, always being on the lookout for our father pulling into the driveway after church. Despite all this sneaking around, music was still very important in our household and would continue to be for years to come. As we grew older, piano lessons were mandatory as well as learning an instrument when we started high school.

Church choir participation was also mandatory. I guess all that goes hand in hand with being a preacher's kid. My mother understood that there was no getting around or getting away from music, whatever that looked like. But gospel music was and would always be my first love and

could never be replaced by another. It would be the groundwork for any music I would sing from that time forward.

It wasn't until I moved to Philadelphia in 1985 that I realized that there was so much more music out there than what I had experienced while growing up in my parents' household, and even during my college years. But it was something about the Blues that seemed more relatable than the other genres. It was raw and personal.

It was relatable, mainly because I had experienced some of those same emotions in my own life. I understood it, I felt it, and it spoke to me in a way that no other music had.

It wasn't until I joined a cover band and ultimately a small quartet blues band that I was able to not only learn more about the blues, but to put my own interpretation of the blues into the songs that I sang. I sang songs from some of the great female blues singers like Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, Big Mama Thornton, Bonnie Raitt, Koko Taylor, and Etta James, to name a few. This wasn't an easy task, though. Why? Because in the beginning I was totally "green"!

Although I ultimately learned who these artists were over time, I never really homed in on the lyrics to the songs they were singing. That's when YouTube became my best friend. Not only did I learn the lyrics, which were sometimes very funny or very sad, but also which artist performed it best. Initially, I felt very inept, to say the least. I felt like this was way over my head, but after singing aloud, singing in my head, and practicing with my bandmates, who cheered me on as they saw me grow into the music, I was finally able to make my slow ascension into the music scene.

My background in Gospel music served me well during this time as I was able to interpret songs the way I wanted them to sound. I realized this when, during one of my many rehearsals with the cover band I was in, the bass player told me that he had never heard anyone sing Patsy Cline's hitmaker, "Crazy", the way that I did! Needless to say, that was the greatest compliment I could ever have been paid during my new music journey.

I am still listening and learning more and more about the blues and the artists that sang them every day. I ask myself questions like: What was their backstory? What were they experiencing in their personal life during that time that inspired these raw emotions in song? Emotions that spoke of hurt, pain, love and joy. Emotions that made you want to cry when you would hear the pain in their voices and rejoice when that pain had been overcome with joy. There are so many stories being told through these songs, until it is almost overwhelming and impossible to grasp. But what I do know is that I have certainly developed a love for it. Jamey's House of Music helps me to do that. Seeing other artists interpret the blues in their own way encourages me to do the same. Yet, I'm never far from my Gospel beginnings in my father's church, which has strongly influenced who I am today — a person who wasn't born into the blues, yet has the blues in me.

# *Intown Innerview*

## *with Mikey Junior*

by: Greg Gaughan

### **1. What drew you to Blues Music?**

As a teenager, I always found myself searching for the sound that I would later find out was blues music. I would hear little bits and pieces of it in hip-hop through sampling they would use creating their beats. For instance, Cypress Hill had a sample of a harmonica during one of their interludes and I always loved that sound before I knew it was a Harmonica. When I found out what Blues Music was, I immediately started researching and collecting tapes,



CD & Records. I have a deep love and respect for ALL music; the Blues is what I find myself listening to the most. Ironically enough, I would later work with the drummer on those Cypress Hill recordings at my friends Blues Barn when recording 'Blues In The Barn Volumes One and Two' produced by Grammy award winning drummer and producer, Andy Kravitz.

### **2. Why did you decide the harmonica was the instrument you wanted to play?**

I dabbled with the Harmonica as a young kid. My dad played so they would be laying around the house. It never seemed make sense until I was about 15 or 16. I found one at a friend's house and started to play it. It sounded good and they had asked me how long I had been playing. I told them I had just picked it up. I immediately went out the next day and purchased a whole set of Harmonicas.

### **3. I understand there are three types of harmonicas, Diatonic, Chromatic and Tremolo. Can you explain the difference that each type of harmonica offers?**

The blues is mostly played on the diatonic and chromatic harmonicas. The Chromatic features all the keys on the piano. The Tremelo harmonica is more of a vibrating sound. The Diatonic is your basic harmonica sound, featuring the ability to bend notes which is crucial when playing the blues.

### **4. When you are writing a song, how do you decide which type of harmonica you want to use?**

I usually will find out what key I'm singing the song in, and that will determine which Harmonica to use. To elaborate on this... if I'm in a minor key, I will tend to use a chromatic or diatonic in the third position. Straight blues like Muddy Waters's 'Hoochie Coochie Man' is played in first position, while Sonny Boy Williamson's 'Don't start me talkin' is played in the second position.

### **5. Can you explain to our readers your process when writing a song?**

When I am fortunate to have a song come to me, I have to work hard at finishing it. Taking out everything that I don't like because it's important that no matter how stupid it sounds in the moment, you get a verse written down whether it works or not. Then you can come back and try to restate it in a more clever or rhythmic way that better fits the song in a whole. My process for songwriting is to try and write every day. You'll end up with a bunch of stuff and by the time you go through it all, there will be something there.

### **6. What is the recording process like once you are ready to go into the studio to record an album?**

I like to think of it as simply recording a moment in time. When you're making a record you are recording a moment in time. With preparation, it should be stress-free and a fun time.

### **7. You have released something like 12 albums/CDs to date, and I've noticed that on each album you have chosen a certain cover song, or songs, to put on each album. How do decide what cover song(s) you want to put on an album, and why that song by that specific artist?**

I like to choose songs that speak to me. The great thing about when people write a song, it means something to them, but could mean something totally different to someone else. It's all about your interpretation of it. If I feel it, I'd love to play it, and if I'm able to play it and feel I can play it well and give it the respect it deserves, I like to get it on a recording.



### **8. You released a tribute album/CD to the late, great Sonny Boy Williamson II (Aleck Rice Miller). Why did you decide to do a tribute album to this blues harmonica player, singer/songwriter?**

His music captivated me and drew me into the art form and the world that is blues harmonica. When I was 15 or 16, I told my father that I had been messing around with the harmonica and was starting to get into the blues. My father gave me several cassette tapes to listen to and one of those tapes was Sonny Boy Williamson's Real Folk Blues. Since then, I have dreamt of one day recording an album that pays tribute to the man whose powerful, distinctively raw music captured my heart and soul.



**9. In 2023, you released two CD's, Blues in the Barn, Volume 1 & Volume 2. What was it like recording in a barn as opposed to a regular recording studio?**

We had an amazing time making those records and it was a longtime dream come true. It was such a wonderful experience and I'd like to refer to the liner notes written by the Blues Barn's owner Gene Stickel.

*'The Blues Barn and the 80-acre farm it sits on is a special place. Maybe it is the proximity to the flowing river as it bends and wraps around the mountain bluffs; or the spirits of the Native Americans whose music and footsteps covered these same paths centuries ago. Whatever it is, there seems some energy and allure that can touch your soul. I've felt it for 60 years roaming these hills. Mikey felt it too over 15 years ago, as did so many of my friends. Always pulling you back, always drawing you in.'*



*'Mikey would call.... "Hey Gene, we're doing a show near you, can we come by the barn for a little after party?" We'd ride the trails on golf carts by moonlight, party, and jam till the wee hours. Many nights we would end up hoot'n and holler'n in the silo marveling at the echo and natural reverb. I'd tell Mikey, "Someday we'll set up a recording booth in this area between the silo and the stage"; Mikey replied "Yeah brother, that would be amazing". The years rolled by, lots of jams, lots of parties and I'd tell my buddies...yeah "someday."*

*'But we needed some Blues Power to find a "Guy" ... a studio recording engineer type guy, because I would not know where to start. So, the call went out.... not by social media, call, or text but through unconscious vibrations amplified by the magic of the mountain.'*

*'Lo and behold into my barn and life walks Andy Kravitz; renowned producer and recording engineer extraordinaire, who proclaims "Wow; what a great spot to record.... the silo sounds like a natural echo/reverb chamber!" ... "Would you consider letting me set up this nook as a recording studio?" asked Andy.'*

*'We bonded instantly, Andy took up residency on the farm and set to work. And so, we were off to the races; Andy in the control room conducting a silo symphony, Mikey Junior and his band; smoking hot, tapping into the barnyard blues vibe and all the blues power the mountain can muster. The feel is real, the band is tight and with the silo touch, it sounds just right! I hope you all enjoy this longtime dream brought to reality!'*

*-Gene Stickel (Blues Barn Owner)'*

**10. In 2014, you released the CD, Traveling South, and in 2024 you released the CD, Traveling North. What was it like working with Dave Gross on both these CD's?**

They were both produced by my good friend, Grammy Nominated guitar player and producer, Dave Gross. We had a lot of fun making these recordings. Dave brings so much talent, knowledge, and emotion to a project & I just love working with him. We are working on something now that we are excited about so, please stay tuned!

**11. Are you currently working on writing songs for a new album?**

Yes, I'm writing every day and look forward to continue making recordings.

**12. Blues music is clearly universal, with Blues bands all over the world. What is your opinion of the Blues music that is being released today?**

There are some great young artists coming up today and it's a very exciting time for the scene. I like to go to the International Blues Challenge every year put on by The Blues Foundation in Memphis, TN. That is where you get to see the up-and-coming talent from all over the globe and I'm never disappointed.

**13. How can we get more young people interested in the Blues?**

Show them the right stuff! Help them along, get them a subscription to a blues magazine, get them a membership to a blue society, show them an entertaining live blues video online. Take them to a show, a festival, a picnic or even a backyard party. If you can raise awareness of it being out there, the music will do the rest. Sometimes it only takes one time of hearing it, and you are hooked. I say raise awareness of it and get it out there, show it to them.

**14. You are married with a wife and two young children. How do you balance performing with being a father and husband?**

I make sure family is always first. That is the simple way that I balance my career and family. Simply, family is the most important thing. ❤️ KIDS & LOVE FIRST!

For more information about Mikey Junior: [Mikey Junior](#)

For more information on the International Blues Challenge check out [The Blues Foundation](#).

# *Women in the Blues:*

## *More Than a Backing Vocal*

by Wendy Logan

—*Celebrating the Bold Voices That Shaped the Sound and Spirit of the Blues*

When people think of the blues, names like Robert Johnson, B.B. King, and Muddy Waters often rise to the top. But dig a little deeper, and you'll find that women have been integral to the blues from the very beginning—not just as background singers, but as innovators, storytellers, trailblazers, and powerhouses who helped define the genre's soul.

### **The Matriarchs of Blues**

In the 1920s, long before blues became a staple of guitar-driven jams, women were the face of the genre. Known as the “Classic Blues” era, this period saw singers like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Mamie Smith commanding stages and recording studios. These women didn't just sing the blues—they lived them, writing about sexuality, survival, betrayal, and resilience in a world that often tried to silence them.

Ma Rainey, often called the “Mother of the Blues,” openly sang about same-sex relationships and independence at a time when doing so was radical. Bessie Smith, the “Empress of the Blues,” brought emotional intensity to her music that influenced generations of singers across genres.

### **Fighting for a Voice in a Male-Dominated Scene**

As the blues evolved, women continued to carve out space for themselves—despite barriers in the recording industry and performance circuits. In the 1950s and '60s, Big Mama Thornton roared onto the scene with her fierce vocals and unshakeable stage presence. Her original recording of “Hound Dog” (later popularized by Elvis Presley) is a raw testament to the power of female-fronted blues.

Koko Taylor, dubbed the “Queen of the Blues,” rose to prominence with her gritty voice and gutsy attitude, becoming one of the few female headliners on the Chicago blues circuit. Women like Etta James, Ruth Brown, and Bonnie Raitt pushed boundaries, blending blues with soul, rock, and R&B—and proving that women could lead the charge, not just support it.

### **Today's Blues Women: Innovating and Leading**

Fast forward to the present, and a new generation of women is keeping the blues alive—and reshaping it for modern audiences. Artists like Shemekia Copeland, Samantha Fish, Susan Tedeschi, and Rhiannon Giddens are challenging expectations with genre-bending styles and socially conscious lyrics.

These musicians honor the past while pushing the blues into new territory. They're producing records, leading bands, headlining festivals, and using social media to reach fans across the globe. They're also rewriting the narrative that blues is a man's world.

### **The Blues Isn't Just a Genre—It's a Voice for Change**

Women in blues have always used the genre as a tool for truth-telling. From songs about heartbreak and oppression to anthems of empowerment and defiance, their music speaks to universal human experiences with a unique intensity.

The impact of women in blues goes far beyond their vocal prowess—they've helped shape the sound, challenged the status quo, and opened doors for countless artists to follow. Today, they're still doing that work, louder and bolder than ever.



Photos Courtesy of . .

Koko Taylor - Bob Corritore Photo Collection

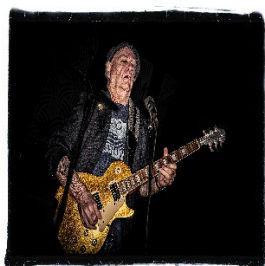
Ma Rainey – Rolling Stone Magazine

Bessie Smith – WBUR

Mamie Smith – USA Today



## "P.B.S. Events You May Have Missed"



**Philadelphia Blues Society's Launch Party – October 27, 2024**



**Lonnie Shields**

**Tom Craig**

**Tim & Slim**

**performing at the Tom Craig Benefit – December 8, 2024**



**Mississippi Earl Brown**  
**April 3, 2025**



**Dr. Harmonica & Rocket 88**  
**May 1, 2025**

**performing at our P.B.S.**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Thursdays @ Jamey's**

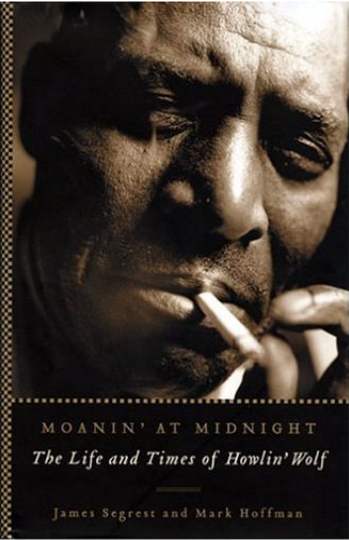


# BOOK CLUB CORNER

by **KATHRYN GREGOIRE**

*Moanin’ at Midnight The Life and Times of Howlin’ Wolf*  
by James Segrest and Mark Hoffman (2004)

The Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania Blues Book Club read *MOANIN’ AT MIDNIGHT: The Life and Times of Howlin’ Wolf* (323 pages) by James Segrest and Mark Hoffman (2004). The reading was augmented by the documentary *Howlin’ Wolf* available on Amazon Prime. Hank Imhof also shared a recorded interview featuring Herbert Sumlin, Howlin’ Wolf’s main guitar player, whom he treated like a son.



Chester Arthur Burnett, nicknamed “Wolf” by his maternal Grandfather Jones, was born on Friday, June 10, 1910, at White Station, Mississippi. Over the course of two months, book club members discussed the characteristics that made Howlin’ Wolf unique, an outstanding performer, and a musical genius. They explored the contributions of his difficult upbringing,

complicated personality, varied life experiences, and enduring personal philosophies to his early musical success in the Delta region and urban Chicago, and in the 1960’s when he was “rediscovered.”

Giving us deeper insights into the music, Hank Imhoff sang and played Howlin’ Wolf classics “Red Rooster” on a 1930 Triolian National Steel guitar and “Spoonful” on a 1917 Washburn parlor style guitar. Both songs of the era discussed for Wolf and others. Spoonful exemplified the one chord modal sound that Wolf and other players like Muddy and John Lee Hooker used to be true to their Delta roots. We discussed how other chords of the progression were implied by *HOWLIN’ WOLF: MOANIN’ AT MIDNIGHT* one or two notes but not used until later renditions by more modern artists were recorded.

“Red Rooster” used a three-chord rock and roll format but Wolf’s early Chess versions were loose as to when the chords were played. When Wolf and Hubert Sumlin went to London for the famous London sessions with the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton and others, the song format was relatively “straightened out” as Hubert mentioned in the video we watched.

While reading, watching the documentary, listening to his music and discussing his story, members developed an ever-deepening respect for Howlin’ Wolf. Book Club members shared their thoughts on what they admired about Howlin’ Wolf and his music:

Hank Imhof: It seems as though Wolf and Muddy Waters were the main carriers of the Delta to Chicago and then the modernization and refinement of the Chicago blues sound. They could revert to that Delta sound instantly. This isn’t to say they were the only blues musicians doing this but it does seem they were the leaders.

Thomas Cook: I had listened to Mr. Wolf for a long time but didn’t know much beyond what I read in liner notes. I was very interested to learn that he was good at business and paid his sidemen fairly and well. This is unusual; probably unique.

Hannah Sherman: Wolf - what a life! From poverty (leaving home as an early teen with rags tied around his feet) to fame and riches (one of the few who left Mississippi in his own car), he reached the epitome of what I consider the reason for coming to this planet. He excelled at and enjoyed what he did for a living, bettered himself, and helped others along the way. Fascinating life story. He put the beast in blues!

Kathy Gregoire: With physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strength, Howlin’ Wolf was a commanding, charismatic presence both on and off the stage. Hard working and gifted, Chester Burnett had a drive to learn. For example, he took adult literacy classes at the Chicago High Schools for almost a decade. Shortly before he died, he received an honorary doctorate from Chicago’s Columbia College, along with other notables, such as the Boston Celtics star Bill Russell and health activist Dr. Quentin Young.

The Book Club members found *Moanin’ At Midnight* to be credible, informative, and enjoyable to read, highly recommending it to anyone who would like to learn more about the amazing bluesman Howlin’ Wolf. The documentary *Howlin’ Wolf* reinforced the learning and gave viewers a full picture of the times he lived in.

Thank you, too, to the BSCP contributors to this book review,



# *In Memoriam*

by Greg Gaughan

## **John Mayall: November 29, 1933 – July 22, 2024**

John Mayall was an English blues and rock musician, songwriter and producer who played guitar, harmonica, and keyboard. Mayall was founding member of John Mayall &



The Bluesbreakers. Guitarists in the band, from 1965-1971 included Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Mick Taylor, John Mark, and Harvey Mandel.

Other musicians in The Bluesbreakers early career included John McVie (Bass) and Mick

Fleetwood (Drums). With a musical career that spanned more than 70 years, John Mayall has often been referred to as the “godfather of the British blues”. He was inducted into the Rock n’ Roll Hall of Fame in the musical influence category in 2024.

## **Carl Weathersby: February 24, 1953 – August 9, 2024**

Carlton Weathersby was an American electric blues guitarist, singer, and songwriter. Born in Jackson, Mississippi his family moved to East Chicago, Indiana when he was eight. He worked with Albery King as his



rhythm guitar player on short road trips after returning from the Vietnam War. He replaced guitarist Carlos Johnson in Billy Branch’s band, The Sons of Blue, and became their full-time guitarist, a position he held for 15 years. In 1997, he was

nominated for the W.C. Handy Award for Best New Blues Artist in 1997. Carl was the headline artist twice a week at the Kingston Mines in Chicago.

## **Mark May: September 29, 1961 – August 12, 2024**

The former Dickey Betts and Great Southern guitarist and



vocalist found the blues when his aunt lent him a copy of B.B. King’s “Live in Cook County Jail” when he was just 11 years old. His brother Ken taught him how to play guitar. He spent most of his career as a

solo artist and fronting the Mark May Band in Houston, Texas. The

blues rock singer/guitarist died on August 12<sup>th</sup> after being involved in a car accident, later succumbing to his injuries at a local hospital.

## **Nick Gravenites: October 2, 1938 – September 18, 2024**

Nick was an American blues, rock and folk singer, songwriter, and guitarist, born in Chicago, was best known



for his work as the lead singer for Electric Flag; which he formed along with Mike Bloomfield. He wrote the song “Born in Chicago”, which became the opening track on the Paul Butterfield Blues Band debut album, and, with guitarist, Mike Bloomfield,

he co-wrote the title track of their 2<sup>nd</sup> album, East-West. He was a major influence on the career of Janis Joplin. He collaborated with Taj Mahal, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and John Cipollina of Quicksilver Messenger Service. He has appeared on 40 some albums as a singer, songwriter, guitarist, and producer. He released his last album Rogue Blues in 2024. Nick had been suffering from diabetes and dementia.

## **George “The Blacksmith” Bonds: January 27, 1973– January 13, 2025**

Legendary blues guitarist, and singer-songwriter, Georgie Bonds was born and raised in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, Georgie Bonds did not grow up listening to



the blues or riding horses. While R&B records fed his musical inspiration since childhood, watching people ride in the park near his home sparked an interest in horses, and led him to buy his first horse at the age of twenty-one. This equine fascination led

him to a livelihood in blacksmithing, a skill he trained for in Martinsville, Virginia. For fifteen years, he worked with horses. Georgie got his first taste of delta blues when a friend loaned him a Robert Johnson tape. There was something about the music that grabbed a hold of him and wouldn’t let go. At that point he knew that the blues was what he needed. One night in the early 1990’s, he stepped onto the stage of an open mic blues jam at “The Barbary”, in Philadelphia, took a deep breath, and belted out “Stompy Monday,” the only blues song he knew. Fortunately, blues legend Sonny Rhodes, who was hosting that night, took a liking to Georgie and became his mentor. Sonny introduced Georgie to more musicians, and taught him how to be a performer, not just a singer. Georgie’s blues career was then well on its way. The unusual and unlikely story of Georgie Bonds’ life led to some wonderful music. In 2001, Georgie independently released his debut CD, “Sometimes I Wonder” to significant critical acclaim. It took a while to overcome some health issues and a few other challenges that life threw at him, but Georgie was persistent and in 2013 Georgie released his second CD, “Stepping Into Time.” Additionally, he was chosen for an acting/singing role in the Broadway hit, It Ain’t Nothin’ But The Blues, which was nominated for four Tony Awards and Best Musical and praised by the New York Times.

## **Barry Goldberg: December 25, 1941 – January 22, 2025**

Legendary blues and rock keyboardist, known for his work with the [Paul Butterfield Blues Band](#) and [Electric Flag](#), died at age 82 due to complications from non-



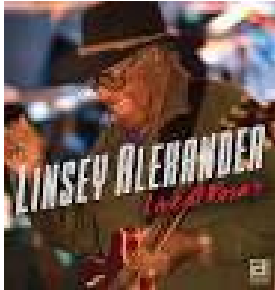
Hodgkin lymphoma. As a teenager in Chicago, Goldberg sat in with Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf and Otis Rush. He played keyboards with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band backing Bob Dylan during his 1965 newly ‘electrified’ appearance at the Newport Folk Festival. He formed

The Electric Flag with Mike Bloomfield in 1967.

Goldberg’s keyboard skills made him one of the most in-demand session musicians, too.

**Linsey Alexander: July 23, 1942 – February 22, 2025**

Linsey Alexander was an American blues songwriter, singer, and guitarist. He was a fixture in clubs on Chicago’s



North Side for nearly two decades and played with such blues musicians as Buddy Guy, A.C. Reed, Magic Slim and B.B. King. Alexander played his own style of electric blues. He was known for playing his guitar “with the energy of a 20-year-

old”. His song, "Saving Robert Johnson" from his 2012 album, “Been There Done That”, was included in the Mississippi Blues Project, a review of Mississippi blues produced by WXPB in Philadelphia.



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**HEADLINER:**

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4:30pm to 6pm**



**Mikey Junior Band  
3:15pm to 4:15pm**



**Billy the Kid & The Regulators  
2pm to 3pm**



**Erin Harpe & Jim Countryman – 1pm to 1:45pm**



**The Philly Blues Kings featuring Clarence Spady and Kate Gaffney – 12pm to 12:45pm**

**Danielle Miraglia – 11am to 11:45pm**



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