



The Philadelphia Blues Society's
Quarterly Newsletter
January to March
2026

Intown Innerview with Diana Rein



Language of the Blues by Debra Devi
Blues Book Club Corner by Kathryn Gregoire
CD Reviews by Phillip Scott
In Memoriam
...and much more!

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P.B.S. Blues Festival and Christmas Party

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EST, Sunday @3am EST or any time on
demand
*WBJB – 90.5FM – “Box of Blues” w/Stu
Coogan, Sunday – 9pm to 12am
*SiriusXM – Bluesville – 24/7
*WDIY – 88.1FM – “Blues After Hours”
w/Joe Cassano, Tuesday – 11pm to 1am
*RMU Radio – www.rmuradio.com - “Damn
Right I Got The Blues” w/Don Luisi,
Thursday – 4pm to 5pm

Letter from the Editor

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

This issue of our first Quarterly Newsletter for 2026 looks back at the last quarter of 2025 and looks forward to what the new year has in store.

You can look back at the 1st Annual Blues Festival, our P.B.S. 1st Thursday's at Jamey's House of Music, reviews of CD's released in 2025, the meaning behind getting your "ashes hauled: and the "axe", read about the "Woman with a Guitar". We'll remember those Blues musicians that have gone before us during the last quarter of 2025, and have an innerview with Romanian-born, California-based Blues Rocker, Diana Rein.

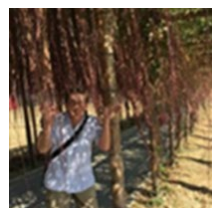
In 2026, the Philadelphia Blues Society will be focusing on starting our Blues in the Schools program which will be chaired by Pamela Renee Smith and Cindy Amoroso. The society is looking forward to bringing our 2nd Annual Blues Festival back on Saturday, October 10, 2026, with a great line-up of Blues artists.

The Philadelphia Blues Society is always looking for blues-loving volunteers to help on one of our committees: Education, Membership, Finance, Fundraising & Grants, Public Relations & Marketing, Technology, Events & Festivals, Membership, IBC, Listening, Membership, Quarterly Newsletter, and Volunteer.

If you are interested in getting involved to help the Philadelphia Blues Society promote, preserve and support blues music through performance, promotion and community education, please email the society at...

info@philadelphiabluesociety.org

The Philadelphia Blues Society's membership has been updated. Memberships will go from January 1st to December 31st of each calendar year. If you wish to join or renew your membership, just go to our website and click the Join-Renew tab at the top of the homepage. Members get 10% off ticket prices to all P.B.S. events.



Greg Gaughan
Managing Editor

Originally posted on Facebook by Deadikace - The Best of Rock and Roll

October 22, 2024

Message from Steve Cropper on his career and playing great Blues guitar...

"I've got a weird career. I was brought up on country music and church singing. When I first heard rhythm and blues, I was only 10 and it really impressed me a lot. I never looked back after that... it's the greatest music I've ever heard.

"But I've also had a fairly well-rounded career, I would say. The most fun I ever had was with John Belushi and The Blues Brothers. People don't believe me but me and Donald 'Duck' Dunn [bass] played exactly how we did in high school, we didn't know anything!

"What's the secret to great blues playing? I don't know if there is one but I've told people in the past be careful what you play on sessions, because you might get asked to play it again sometime. Guitar players today play exactly what they did in the studio on stage, or at least pretty close. In the early days, if you came in playing like how they do now, it probably wouldn't have even been recorded!

"I don't warm-up or anything – when they say my name I just walk out and go – so I always look at my guitar before playing and say, 'If you don't play good tonight, you're going to be firewood in the morning!' Yeah, at times it can feel like my guitar doesn't want to talk to me (laughs).

— Steve Cropper

Photo: David McClister for The Wall Street Journal



Upcoming Concerts

January:

Saturday, the 24th – The Wendy Logan Band & Joey Stout & The Big Notes – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm - Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Friday, the 30th – Dustin Douglas & The Electric Gentlemen – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

February:

Thursday, the 5th – Philadelphia Blues Society presents The Empty Belly Blues Band featuring Alabama Sam – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), , Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 7th – The Delco School of Rock presents their Student Blues Band Ensemble – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), , Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Friday, the 13th – Slim & The South Street Hustle – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour),,, Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

March:

Thursday, the 5th – Philadelphia Blues Society presents West Coast and East Coast Guitar Monsters TOGETHER 2026 featuring Dean Shot and Junior Watson – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), , Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$35 advance/\$40 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Friday, the 6th- Erin Harpe's Country Blues Duo featuring Jim Countryman – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 7th- GeminiiiiDRAGON – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Door: 6pm , (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 14th – Clarence Spady – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 21st – The Corty Byron Band – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$15 advance/\$20 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 28th – Stew Cutler & Friends with special guest Jesse Loewy (guitar) - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

April:

Friday, the 3rd - Blues People - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 4th – The Deb Callahan Band - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Friday, the 10th – Ryan Hartt - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$25 advance/\$30 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Saturday, the 18th – Bluestime – Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA - Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Friday, the 24th – Mark Hummel with Anson Funderburg - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA - Doors: 6pm (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$35 advance/\$40 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

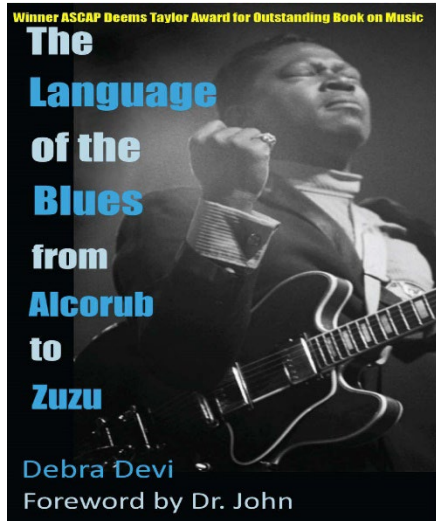
Saturday, the 25th – The Dukes of Destiny - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Door: 6pm, (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

May:

Friday, the 29th – Billy The Kid & The Regulators - Jamey's House of Music, Lansdowne, PA – Door: 6pm, (Happy Hour), Show: 8pm – Tickets: \$30 advance/\$35 walk-ins (www.jameyshouseofmusic.com)

Language of the Blues

By; Debra Devi



Ashes Hauled

When Sleepy John Estes sang, “I need to get my ashes hauled,” in “The Girl I Love, She Got Long Curly Hair” in 1929, he was expressing the less-than-romantic sentiment that he was feeling a bit backed up and needed to ejaculate. Getting one’s ashes hauled does not necessarily mean that one participated in sexual intercourse. Any sexual act that leads to the desired result will do.

The term originated with the perceived need to visit a prostitute in order to “empty the trash.” This justification reflected the notion, dating back to the Middle Ages, that

semen must be “regularly vented to prevent a poisonous accumulation.”

Songs:

“I Let My Daddy Do That”- Hattie Hart

“Let Your Money Talk”- Kokomo Arnold

AXE

Axe is slang for a guitar. According to New Orleans-born pianist Dr. John (Mac Rebennack), musicians lifted “axe” from the illegal lottery business to give themselves a little anti-hero flair. “An axe was a gun or a piece,” Dr. John explained, “and they [gangsters] used to traditionally carry it in a bag.” The Thomson Submachine Gun, or Tommy gun, was a favorite. It was long and lean, like the new solid-body electric guitar developed by Slingerland in 1939.

The intense Chicago blues guitarist Frank “Son” Seals was nicknamed “Bad Axe” for his undeniable prowess on his instrument and his fierce demeanor on stage. Born in Osceola, Arkansas, Seals grew up around his father’s juke joint, the Dipsy Doodle, soaking up sets by Albert King and Earl Hooker. Seals hit the road with King and Hooker when he was eighteen, and soon moved to Chicago, where he developed into one of the great powerhouses of the electric blues. Seals released eleven albums, included 1984’s *Bad Axe* (Alligator Records) before succumbing to complications from diabetes Dec. 20, 2004, at sixty-two.

Songs:

“Bad Axe” —Frank “Son” Seals

“Bless My Axe” —Kenny “Blue” Ray

“Just Playing My Axe” —George “Buddy” Guy



Debra Devi is a blues/rock musician and author based in Jersey City NJ. The Language of the Blues: From Alcorub to Zuzu (foreword by Dr. John) received the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for Outstanding Book on Music. Order signed copies at <https://debradevi.com/books>.

Philadelphia Blues Society presents 1st Thursday at Jamey’s House of Music
32 S. Lansdowne Ave., Lansdowne, PA 19050

Thursday, February 5th – The Empty Belly Blues Band featuring Alabama Sam

Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 walk-ins (P.B.S. Members get 10% off)

Thursday, March 5th – East Coast/West Coast Guitar Monsters TOGETHER 2026

featuring Dean Shot and Junior “Guitar” Watson

Tickets: \$35 advanced/\$40 walk-ins (P.B.S. Members get 10% off)



Intown Innerview with Diana Rein

from Innerview of the Blues on YouTube - March of 2020

by: Greg Gaughan

GG: You are originally from Romania and you family moved to Chicago when you were 3 years old?

DR: Yeah, my dad was all about the American Dream. He almost died to get to get us here, legally. We lost our Romanian citizenship. It took us awhile to get our American citizenship. My dad worked hard because he wanted a better life for us. My aunt was a very famous singer in Romania, and she was befriended by Ceausescu, the president or whatever. His son befriended my aunt, and my dad met him once. My dad said to him, "I would really like to go to America. Is there any way you can help me out?" He basically told my dad, "If you murder someone I can help you get out of jail, but to get out of the country, I can't help you with that." My dad told me this story that he went to the Romanian Consulate, and he had a big bottle of gasoline and poured it on himself and threatened to set fire to himself if they didn't give him the paperwork to leave. My dad is my hero!

GG: I understand when you were a child that you used to have your parents play you Bee Gee's songs to help you go to sleep?

DR: Yeah, to nap or go to sleep I needed to hear music. I guess I had just liked their melodic voices.

GG: What was your earliest recollection of hearing an electric guitar as a child?

DR: I remember one distinct moment where I got, like goosebumps, stopping in my tracks. I think I was 8. It was the Moscow Peace Festival with a bunch of hair bands, the Scorpions, Bon Jovi, Cinderella, and I remember hearing an intro to a Cinderella song and Tom Kiefer was playing his Gibson guitar and it just floored me.

GG: You're 8 years old, at the Back Room in Chicago, and you got invited up on stage to perform with the band, what was that like?

DR: My uncle was married to my aunt came to America after we did. He was in a band and they brought me up. That's when I got my first taste of the Blues.



GG: I understand that you were also a child actress and you were in the movies Home Alone and Denis the Menace, and you've done theater and commercials, too. How did you get into acting?

DR: I was at a public school in Chicago. I had skipped 2nd grade. My principal talked to my parents and said, "she entertains the kids during recess. She's always doing little skits for everyone. Have you ever thought of putting her into a fine arts school?" He told my parents about a school called Franklin Fine Arts Center. I was transferred there. They did the regular school plus they would have music class, art class, dance class, piano class, drama class and visual arts class, I was introduced to a lot of

creative things, and I felt home because I was always videotaping myself, recording myself at home. So, to be in that environment was a good move. When I was at the art school, sometimes we would have people come in looking for talent, or we would have people looking for children to narrate books. Someone came in that wanted a narrator for a children's book and I got the job. While I was recording the voice-over, he asked me if I had ever thought about acting. My dad said, "No, she really loves Star Search, but we don't have the money or the connections". Well, he said to my dad, "I act and I have an agent, and I could set you up a meeting with him". That's what he did and the rest is history. I went on auditions for Home Alone. I didn't think I was going to get it, but I ended up getting it. The process was long.

GG: At what age did you decide to forgo an acting career and transition into being a musician?

DR: For me, it was when, literally so late. My whole life was a battle between music and acting because of Home Alone. It was such a wonderful experience, but it was almost a curse because it took me away from music which I was doing daily. I made me feel like now this is my fate. I have to be an actress, and I devoted myself to 15, almost 20 years acting. I was still doing music. I did my first album in 2007, then a CD release. I went through all these challenges with my voice. I had an operation for a node. It's like this whole journey to come full circle to feel like you fully belong. I had my son in 2012. His name is Vaughan. He's named after Stevie Ray Vaughan. When he turned a year old that's when I decided that I was going to learn how to play lead guitar. I was going to make a Blues/Rock record like I always wanted to and that's when I made my album, "Long Road". I didn't know anyone, so I created it on my own. The next album came after that, "Queen of My Castle" and I had Michael Leisure produce it. He's Walter Trout's drummer. It's just been an amazing journey!

GG: You mentioned Stevie Ray Vaughan as one of your influences. Who were some of your other Blues Influences?

DR: Stevie Ray Vaughan was pretty much the portal to other amazing guitar players. Although, I had definitely heard of Eric Clapton way before Stevie, and BB King, and Buddy Guy. But, it was mostly Stevie that gave me this portal into all the modern players like Philip Sayce, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Joe Bonamassa and Jonny Lang. Watler Trout is certainly an influence. Ritchie Kotzen I love! He's more rock based, but I think he's not "stuck". I don't want to be "stuck". But the sound I really love is Blues and Blues-Rock. So, I'm a little conflicted.



GG: Can you share your tips with our reads on what got you focused on guitar playing?

DR: The one thing that got me focused was my son. Before then, I was dilly-dallying. I wasn't consistent. I was picking it up sometime; let it go most of the time. When I had my son, I just felt like I really had something to prove to him, in a way. I wanted to be a good role model for him. I wanted him to see you can follow your passion and make something of yourself. So, I had my mom watch my son while I would practice 3 hours of guitar every day. I went to a website called, True Fire and saw a woman teaching Blues-Rock. Her name is Kelly Richey. I started off a year with her. She taught me some great patterns and things that freed me up. I started writing music. It was such a gift to have that at the beginning of my very focused time playing. When I think back, I love that time so much because it wasn't spread out in many directions. It was just playing the guitar, studying the guitar, practicing the guitar, all guitars. After that it slowly became, now you have to write music, now you have to learn how to record music, produce music, get the music out there. How do you do the administrative side get it steaming, and on social media. It became more diluted as time went on. Right now, even though I am doing a lot of social media I feel like I'm back in that realm of just practicing a lot of Stevie Ray Vaughan licks, and it feels really good.

A lot of times I think what is success. I thought success was one thing which was "how to make it in the music business get on a label". It just felt so....it didn't feel grounded at all. Now, when I think of success, if I can pick up my guitar every day, if I can play, if I can just get better.... that's success to me. A lot has changed because of Covid and my whole mental aspect.

GG: I read that you have YouTube videos on how to play guitar. How can our readers find your videos?

DR: They can just go to YouTube and search my name, Diana Rein. I highly suggest getting a mentor or someone through a service like True Fire. I suggest having someone to guide you, even if it's just for a year, just to get you going.

GG: I understand that you were the first female artist endorsed by J. Rocket Audio Design, and that you are also endorsed by D&A Guitar Gear. Can you explain to our readers the gear that you use?

DR: I use the D&A guitar stands and J. Rocket I was using a couple of their pedals. When I do my videos, I use a Quilter Amp. It's a digital amp but it's really awesome. I took it on tour with me a year ago. I have a cabinet that's mic'd. The only pedal that I use is a Tech 21 Ritchie Kotzen Fly Rig. I keep it simple. I don't like to get bogged down with my gear.

GG: What brand of guitar do you prefer to play and why?

DR: I love a Fender Stratocaster. My main Strat is a Sunburst '62 Reissue. I just love them because of their bell-tones.

GG: In 2007, you released your album, "The Back Room". Is it fair to say that this album is more in the rock genre than the Blues?

DR: I don't know what genre it's in because I was confused. I was like, I wanna play Blues, but I wanna play some Jack Johnson stuff. I was 29 when I released that album. I had some songs on there that were inspired by a Jack Johnson vibe. But I was only playing acoustic guitar at that time. I wish I could have played lead guitar. I played lead guitar on one song. One song was a very Blues-based. It was just an EP of eight songs that I had written. I had a friend help me record it in my place in Chicago at the time. I love the songs, but it was a far cry from what I wanted it to be. And that's okay because evolution is supposed to happen.



GG: In 2016, you released your 2nd album, "Long Road". I understand you played all the instruments on that album, as well as recorded and produced it by yourself?

DR: In 2012, I had my son. November of 2013, I decided I was going to get going on the guitar and I immediately wrote "Long Road", the title song. I had a lot to say and that song is pretty damn emotional. I was doing my guitar lessons, practicing a whole lot, learning about effects. I didn't know anything about effects, or amps, or anything. I didn't really know how to record music on my own. I was doing tutorials. I had a big learning curve. And that's why it took until 2016 for it to be released. I did have it professionally mixed, but everything else I did on my own. I have to say it is my favorite album to this date because I feel that songs came from such an honest place.

GG: "Long Road" was nominated for a Grammy?

DR: Yes, it was in the pre-nominations. It didn't make it into the Top 5 or anything, but I was on the nomination ballot.

GG: However, you won three awards: Best Blues Artist, Best Female Album and Fan Favorite for "Long Road" at the 2016 LA Critics Awards. That's Pretty awesome!

DR: It was pretty awesome. That was a great year for me.



GG: I came across a TEDX event that you did talking about your journey back to music. Would you share that story with our readers?

DR: In 2011, I had vocal surgery to take care of a vocal polyp that I had for who knows how long, I was diagnosed with it in 2009. I kinda gave up on my music dream because I couldn't sing for a long period of time. My voice would get hoarse. It would hurt so I just let it go. I let music go. I focused on acting. I moved to LA from Chicago. I was doing the acting thing. I did a couple shows. One at the Key Club

and one at some random place with my acoustic guitar. But, it wasn't sticking for me. I wasn't disciplined. I let the dream go.

I had the surgery in 2011. That was amazing! To be free of that constriction and challenge. Then, I had my son. I let acting go. I realized how it was a soul-sucker for me, having my being the way I look on the outside be a determiner if I booked a job or how that industry looked at you and judges you, blatantly to your face without any sort of remorse. You know they give you flippant remarks. It's soul-sucking and I didn't enjoy it after 15 or 20 years. Even though I thought that was my destiny I quickly learned that when I was doing music, writing music (in my room) I felt so much more positive energy and so much more gratification and pride in what I was doing. To be able to come back from an injury and have my son and just totally got me on the right path again. That's why I called my album, "Long Road". That's why that song "Long Road" means so much to me. People cry when they hear that song.

GG: When you did the TED Talk, you played two songs, "Come Back Home" and "Peace", which is an instrumental. Why did you choose to play these two songs, and what is the story behind each song?

DR: "Come Back Home" is about coming back full circle to what you are destined to do. I was going through some health issues while I was recording the album. I didn't know what the heck was wrong with me. Music is what really helped me out of it. Music is what kept me going and got me healthy. I think because music is really powerful. "Peace" ...I love guitar instrumentals and a big reason for that is because one of my guitar heroes, Philip Sayce. He's got one of the

most beautiful instrumentals, “Alchemy”. I just wanted to... and Stevie Ray Vaughan, my #1. He’s got “Riveria Paradise” and “Lenny”. There’s just so much emotion and I love bringing that emotion from my guitar to the listener. I enjoy it more than singing. I feel it’s more powerful. I have a much bigger range to play with. My dog had passed away in 2016. I wrote two songs, “Zoe” that’s an instrumental too, and “Peace”. That song ended up on “Long Road” and “Zoe” ended up on my last album, “Queen of My Castle”.

GG: Let’s talk about your writing process. Are you always writing? What’s your process like?

DR: I feel like I’m a frickin’ lazy writer! When I write, it’s like, okay, I’ve lived some life, a year or more, I’m going to devote the next two weeks to writing and I’ll just go for it. I’ll write like twenty songs. I’m a bulk writer.

GG: Once you have the songs written do you get the band together, send the songs out to the band members put their parts to the songs, how does that all come together prior yo going into the studio to record?

DR: I had two amazing musicians that I toured with last year. But I don’t have a regular band, especially since we disbanded, and with Covid nothings going on live. What I did during quarantine I wrote about 20 songs, and I recorded them myself, played all the instruments, vocals, and mixed and mastered them.



GG: On your 3rd album, “Queen of My Castle”, once you got into the studio what is your process working with band members and the producer?

DR: I was Michael Leisure who co-produced with me. We started working with arranging. Then, we went into the studio for two and a half days. There were fifteen songs. We had a bass player that Michael hired. Michael played drums. It was really relaxed. Basically, we laid down the foundation to the songs. Then, Michael would come to my house, and we would lay down guitar more rhythm accent guitars and

then we did the vocals. When it was time to do the lead guitar parts Michael was on tour with Walter Trout. I would basically send him my lead guitar parts, solos, and fills and he would give me notes and I would review them.

GG: You released “Queen of My Castle” on Gulf Coast Records. How did that come about?

DR: I was about to release it on CD Baby. I got an email from my publicist, Doug Deutsch, and he had started working with Gulf Coast Records which is owned by Mike Zito, and Guy Hale out of London. He sent it to them. They liked it. I got on board with them for that album.

GG: In 2019 you went on tour to promote “Queen of My Castle”. You toured in the United States and in Romania. What was it like to go back home to Romania and play in front of 8,000 people?

DR: To play for them was a dream come true. I had a Romanian drummer and bass player hired to play with me. That was really cool! It was a bit emotional. I talked to the audience in a little bit of Romanian, kind of like broken Romanian. I had always dreamed of going back...so I got my dream.

GG: You have several tattoos. Is there any significance with your tattoos?

DR: My tattoo, from 2016, of cherry blossoms, the name of my album, “Long Road”, and the Prince symbol because he passed away right as I was finishing up and releasing the “Long Road” album. Prince was a big influence on me. I have a tattoo on my left wrist of SRV (Stevie Ray Vaughan), so I when I look at my guitar and play, I can see his initials. On my right arm I have a large feather with two little birds. I was playing “Little Wing” a lot then. It’s probably my favorite song to play live. Stars, I love stars. I have one with my family and my pet’s initials. One with the number 3 which is a power number for me. My sister and I got the same tattoo of a heart and a broken heart, and I have a tattoo of “Yogi” with wings. “Yogi” was my sister’s pet pig that died.

GG: What makes you happy?

DR: My son, my husband, my dog in the morning, my comfy couch, being surrounded by my family. I’m a Taurus. I love feeling safe and the comforts of home. Happiness is feeling healthy. I’m happy to have an outlet on social media to connect with people and share my music.

GG: What makes you mad?

DR: The thing I hate the most is when you’re ready to play something, you’re ready to record something, but you have this new piece of equipment you’ve never worked with before and then you end up wasting eight hours trying to get this thing to work. You have a headache, your blood pressure is up, and you’ve lost your will to do anything. That makes me mad. Oh, when my dog barks. That makes me mad. Whenever I try to leave the room, he barks at me.

GG: What is your favorite curse word?

DR: If my son is visiting my parents I turn into a truck driver because I just love swearing.

GG: What is one profession you would not want to do?

DR: Dentist! I was a dental assistant for about 3 weeks. I’m not good with sterilizing things and drills, and looking in people’s mouths is not my thing.

GG: What does Diana Rein have planned for 2021?

DR: I want to build on my connections with fans and release some new material as singles. I'm not gonna do an album. I'm just gonna release singles and see how they land. I'm really focused on practicing guitar so my plan for 2021 is to get even better on guitar. Then post them on social media and share with everybody. Focus on staying healthy and eating healthy and staying balanced.

GG: Where can our readers learn more about you and your music?

DR: My website is dianarein.com, and also on YouTube if you search my name. I also started doing TikTok, @dianareinmusic. I'm also on Instagram with the handle, @dianarein.

GG: Diana, thank you for your time to stop by and chat with me here on Innerview of the Blues.

DR: Thank you, Greg.

BLUES BOOK CORNER

By Kathryn Gregoire



WOMAN WITH A GUITAR: MEMPHIS MINNIE BLUES

Eager to learn more about female blues artists, the book club members selected *Woman with a Guitar: Memphis Minnie Blue's* by Paul and Beth Garon. This biography, written in 1973, was re-released in 1992 following a surge of interest created by female musicians who discovered and were inspired by her music and the strength of her character which made her successful in a man's world.

A major Fan, Bonnie Raitt, financed a headstone for the grave of Memphis Minnie in 1996. The inscription on the back of her gravestone reads: "The hundreds of sides Minnie recorded are the perfect material to teach us about the blues. For the blues are at once general, and particular, speaking for millions, but in a highly singular, individual voice. Listening to Minnie's songs we hear her fantasies, her dreams, her desires, but we will hear them as if they were our own."

Memphis Minnie was born in Algiers (Orleans parish), Louisiana, on June 2, 1897, the oldest of the 13 children of Gertrude and Abe Douglas. Minnie's given name was Lizzie, but she was known as "Kid" while growing up in Walls, Mississippi. She first left home with her guitar at age 13 or 14 for Beale Street in Memphis, where she took on the name Minnie which she continued to use for all her personal and professional documents.

Most of the somewhat limited information about Minnie's early life was gleaned from her youngest and only remaining sibling,

Daisey. Book club members lamented that more information about Minnie's life was not recorded. The first 87 pages of the book followed by 50 photographs of Minnie, her family and friends, and music related documents gives the reader a sense of the hard-working, high-energy, dynamite woman she was.

Using the paranoiac-critical method, the *WOMAN WITH A GUITAR: MEMPHIS MINNIE BLUES* authors studied Minnie's songs, organizing them by poetic, psychological and social categories: crime, doctors and disease, doors, dirty dozens, duets, food and cooking, horses, trains and travel, mad love and work. The song chapters are followed by a discography of Memphis Minnie, who sang on 184 issued sides of records and played on an additional 38 issued sides from 1929 to the 1960s.

A prolific song writer and outstanding guitarist, Minnie was a very popular country

blues musician. She influenced numerous performers including Big Bill Broonzy, Memphis Slim, Tampa Red, and Chuck Barry and was the role model for many female blues singers.

A book club meeting highlight was Hank Imhof playing Memphis Minnie's songs for us and sharing his videos by Del Rey.

Hank writes "I thought I first heard Memphis Minnie aka Elizabeth Douglas on a CD put out by Maria Muldaur, the song was 'You Can Be My Chauffeur.' In reality, I had been introduced to her music by many different artists and the list just kept growing.

"I then heard Del Rey who studied Memphis Minnie extensively and does an amazing job performing her works in her style. So, after seeing Del Rey for the third time I bought her DVD lessons on Homespun Home | Homespun and dug in. Del is a good teacher, and I started really enjoying working on new material of Minnie's presented by Del Rey.

"I first performed 'Ain't Nothin' in Ramblin' on a 1963 Harmony/Kay archtop. I thought that song represented a look at Black Lives Matter from the 1930's. 'Hoodoo Lady' was on an Eastman dreadnought and I was interested in this song as it was a look at the very real beliefs in the supernatural and the magic powers that are in that realm. From time immemorial human beings have always been influenced and swayed by the supernatural and still are today.

"The last song was 'Drunken Barrelhouse Blues' which I performed on a 1930 National steel Triolian similar to what Minnie may have used. For the book club I played a part of Del's lesson on 'Drunken Barrelhouse Blues' for everyone to listen to Del and her approach and love of Memphis Minnie and her music.

"Minnie played with the boys so to speak. She learned and matched and then excelled at guitar and the blues. She could play solo, duo with one of her two husbands and as part of an ensemble with piano, bass, drums etc. She played Delta style and then any of the blues' styles that grew out of the Delta. This included work with some jazz artists also.

"All of this in what basically was a man's world of blues music at the time. She has definitely become one of my favorites. She was strong, smart, beautiful and quite the musician; in all ways quite inspiring and amazing."

Book club members offer some of their thoughts on the factors that contributed to her phenomenal success.

Tom Cook notes that Minnie was unique in playing her guitar with no f holes which reduced feedback. He suggests looking at the Payers Vintage Instruments website under arch top guitars to see what one looks like.

Linda Null believes Minnie's lyrics have stood the test of time because they continue to be relevant. For example, she

says, “there is one line that stuck with me from ‘Nothing in Rambling’ – I was walking through the alley with my hand in my coat, the police started to shoot me, thought it was something I stole?”

“There are a lot of stories in her lyrics! For example, my take on some of the songs: ‘Me and My Chauffeur Blues’ (women can just hire a man when she needs him), ‘In My Girlish Days’ (about a pregnant teen regaining self-esteem), ‘Bumble Bee’ (a somewhat erotic song), ‘Jockey Man Blues’ (about being a dominant woman), ‘If You See Mr. Rooster’ (about a man who takes off), “Hoodoo Lady” (about a sneaky woman).”

Linda also considers Minnie’s use of rhythm to be amazing. “Listen to ‘Frankie Jean’ (about a horse). You can hear her Minnie change strumming to replicate a horse trotting (she whistles great in this one, too). In ‘When the Levee Breaks,’ her picking really highlights the story line. And ‘Black Cat Blues’ and ‘Ice Man?’ Just wow!”

The BSCP Blues Book Club meets on Zoom the third Monday of the month from 11 am – 1 pm.

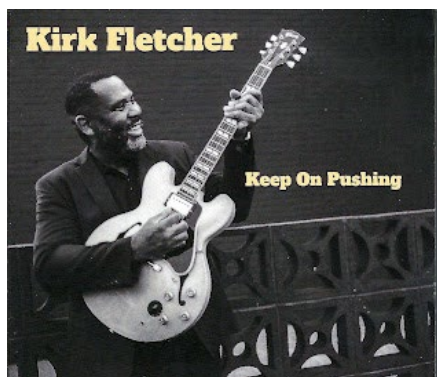
To participate, please email bluesmunga@gmail.com

CD Reviews

Kirk Fletcher – Keep on Pushing (Vizztone Label Group)

By Phillip Smith; August 23, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



Keep on Pushin, the eighth album from bluesman Kirk Fletcher is a delightfully smooth recording. Consisting of a mix of originals and classic-era blues covers, this ten-track record was recorded in Wow and Flutter Studio in East Nashville and co-produced by Fletcher and JD Simo. It features JD Simo on slide guitar with Nashville-based musicians Jason Smay on drums, and Ron Eloff on bass.

A cover of “It’s Love Baby” ushers the album in with Fletcher’s warm guitar tones, and smooth vocals. This classic deep cut was originally released in 1955, and was a hit for several artists: Louis Brooks and His Hi-Toppers, Hank Ballard’s The Midnighters, and Ruth Brown. Fletcher takes on Arthur Crudup’s 1951 song of despair in “I’m Gonna Dig Myself a Hole”, and brilliantly delivers it with a locomotive twang. “Croke”, an original West-coast jump-blues instrumental, puts me right in my happy place. The album’s title-track is as real-deal blues as can get with “Keep On Pushing”, a title Fletcher states “is a positive message in these uncertain times”. I absolutely love the closing track “Blues For Robert Nighthawk” written by Simo. This song is a deliciously swampy slice of delta blues. Slathered with Simo’s masterful slide guitar, this one is an amazing listen.

Straight-up blues fans will definitely want to pick up Kirk Fletcher’s Keep On Pushing. It really is a great album.

For more info on Kirk Fletcher, visit his website at <https://kirkfletcherband.com/>

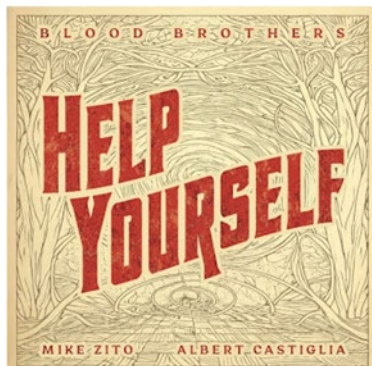
Blood Brothers – Help Yourself (Gulf Coast Records)

By Phillip Smith; September 27, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com

It has almost been a couple of years since Mike Zito and Albert Castiglia aka The Blood Brothers released their extraordinary debut album on Zito’s Gulf Coast Record label. Help Yourself, their new album is another brilliant recording. Steeped in old-school southern rock, blues, and soul, this record quickly draws me in. With Zito and Castiglia both standing front and center on vocals

and guitars, their band is comprised of Scot Sutherland on bass guitar, Lewis Stephens on piano/organ, Matt Johnson on drums/vocals, and Roy Hangen on drums/percussion.



Title-track “Help Yourself” fiercely kicks in the door as it lays down a rocking infectious riff coated with a thick layer of fuzz. Words of wisdom that ring so very true are delivered through a wall of searing guitar on “Can’t Be A Prophet (In Your Home Town)”. I love their instrumental “Soulard Serenade”. It hits like a classic Allman Brothers song with its intoxicating slide on dual guitars, and swirling keys. It is a magnificent six-minute-plus jam which I can listen to over and over again. J.J. Cale’s “Low Down”, the only cover song on the album, is played with a scorching

finesse. I can’t help but fall for “Ol’ Victrola”, written by Castiglia as an homage to vintage vinyl, turn-tables, and man-caves. I dig the Chuck Berry spirit that song is soaked in. The intensity of being on the run makes for a cookin’ track in “Running Out of Time”. Zito seems take a classic Bob Seger approach to the storytelling which keeps me glued to the song.

From start to finish, The Blood Brothers’ “Help Yourself” flows with a rocking, bluesy swagger. It’s a fantastic album.

For more info on Blood Brothers, visit the website at <https://www.bloodbrothersband.com/>

Piper & The Hard Times – Good Company (Hard Times Records)

By Phillip Smith; September 20, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



About ten months ago, Piper & the Hard Times released their debut album Revelation. It took only one listen to that record for me to fall in love with it. That recording spent two weeks at #1 on the Billboard Blues Chart and landed on my PhillyCheeze Top 25 albums of 2024. Piper & the Hard Times have a new record now called Good Company. It’s no wonder this Nashville-based band pulled down first place at the 2024 International Blues Challenge in Memphis. These guys are one hot and funky blues band comprised of Chairman of Good Times Al

“Piper” Green on vocals, Chief Riff Officer Steve “The Conductor” Eagon on guitar, Chief Rhythm Officer Dave “Sexy Boy” Colella on drums and percussion, Chief Soul Officer Amy “The Professor” Frederick on piano, organ, and Rhodes, Chief Groove Officer Parker “Porkchop Funkstick” Hawkins on bass, with Good Company Consultants Eddie Meyer on tenor sax, Lisa Oliver-Gray and Etta Britt on background vocals, Charlie DiPuma on additional saxophone, and John “Hotfingers” Wallum on organ.

Title track “Good Company”, an homage to close friends, initiates this twelve-track album with a serious driving force. Green’s vocals are strong and fearless as Eagon lays down a smokin’ guitar performance. I love the wafting greasy funk surrounding “Cowboy Gucci”. Hawkins surely earns his nickname on this infectious track. A fabulously chunky rhythm reels me in the stellar blues-rocker “In the Meantime”. Fueled with psychedelic guitar licks and the swirling sound of keys this track has a vintage Hendrix vibe. Eagon and Green have a distinct way of writing and arranging songs that people are craving to hear. “My Place” is a great example with its bouncy, get-down groove which, more often than not, demands extra replays. The record ends with a song of nostalgia called “Those Days”. I can certainly identify with Green as he reminisces about the simple days of yore, of being a kid and playing outside with friends. It’s a terrific song.

Piper & the Hard Times have another hit record on their hands with Good Company. It’s the kind of album that one can play from start to finish on repeat and just soak up its goodness.

For more info on Piper & The Hard Times, visit the website

<https://www.piperandthehardtimes.com>

Candice Ivory – New Southern Vintage (Nola Blue Records)

By Phillip Smith; October 4, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



New Southern Vintage, the latest album from St-Louis based singer/songwriter/producer Candice Ivory is quite an incredible recording. The original tracks written by her and guitarist Robert Allen Parker are strong and riveting. Dubbed the Queen of Avant Soul, Ivory certainly has made quite the impression on me with her silky, soulful vocals. For this recording, she is backed by the Blue Bloods comprised of Parker and Adam Hill on guitars, Khari Wynn on bass, and Donnon R. Johnson on drums. Ivory also enlists an impressive group of guest artists to

record with: Jan Hartmann on harmonica, Ben Levin on piano, Yubu Kazungu on vocals, Chris Stephenson on organs, Antonia Vergara on guitars/vocals, Jimmy “Duck” Holmes on guitar/vocals, Damian “Yella P” Pearson on guitar/harmonica, David Evans on guitar, Takuto Asano on guitar, and Andy Cohen on guitar.

Ivory ushers the album in with a song of deceit and unfaithfulness “Ain’t So Blind”, featuring a hard-driving John Lee Hooker-inspired rhythm, smokin’ harp, and delectable vocals. It’s a great track, and it pulls me right into the record. “Blue Blood” keeps the blues rolling in a stylin’ and infectious way. Her cover of The Fieldstones’ “I’m in Trouble” off the Memphis Blues Today album is a wonderful tribute to her great uncle Will Roy Sanders, a highly respected Memphis

bluesman who fronted the band for around twenty years from the Seventies up to the Nineties. “Foolish Pleasure” brings Yubu Kazungu in for a mesmerizing duet. It’s an absolutely beautiful song. The rhythmic sound of North Mississippi hill-country blues lures me in to “Strong Black Mattie”. The dual-guitars and sounds of B-3 walk the tightrope between hypnotic and psychedelic, and I love every bit of it. I dig the Allman Brothers vibe Parker pours over “Look Away” (note : Parker’s admiration for Duane Allman was the inspiration for his instrumental “Skydog” which appeared on his album *The River’s Invitation*). With guitar in hand, Jimmy “Duck” Holmes shares the microphone with Ivory for some “Catfish Blues”. Hearing this collaboration really puts a smile on my face. I’ve had the blessing of seeing Holmes perform on a couple of my visits to Clarksdale, Mississippi for the Sunflower River Blues & Gospel Fest. He’s a treasure indeed. Yella P, Asano, and Levin are all guests on Ivory’s “Crown Royal Bag Blues”. This nostalgic, slow-tempo song about drinking the blues away is an instant classic for sure. Ivory closes out the album with a pair of Memphis Minnie covers: “World of Trouble” and “Shout the Boogie”. Levon plays these piano-centric songs with excellence as Ivory pays a most respectable homage to the legendary artist.

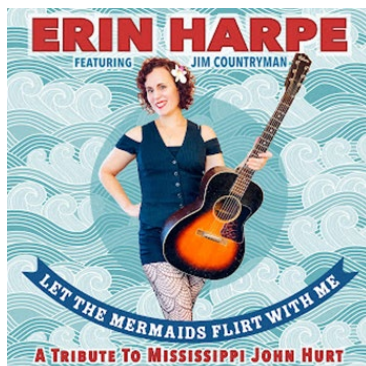
With every listen to Candice Ivory's *New Southern Vintage*, I find something new and exciting that catches my attention. The record is a gem with many facets.

For more info on Candice Ivory visit the website at <https://newsouthernvintage.com/>

Erin Harpe featuring Jim Countryman – Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me (Vizztone label Group)

By Phillip Smith; October 18, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me, A Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt, marks the fifth album from Erin Harpe on the Vizztone Label Group. Harpe’s alluring vocals and her mastery of the Piedmont Blues style of guitar playing hooked me on the very first listen of this soulful acoustic recording. Self-produced and arranged, the album was recorded live in Harpe’s home studio with her husband Jim Countryman on bass guitar. They hold tight to keeping the music tied to its original time period and in doing so, constructed

a fabulous homage.

One couldn’t ask for a better song to kick this off with than Hurt’s 1928 classic “Candy Man”. The song has been stuck in my head since hearing this beautifully executed rendition. Harpe’s

guitar picking is remarkably clean. A wave of melancholy washes over me when title-track “Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me” plays. It’s a gorgeous song of despair, and Harpe sings it with an amazing grace. A smile quickly forms on my face when I hear “Make Me a Pallet On Your Floor”. The song is truly one of my favorites. When it comes to murder ballads, “Stagolee” is among the most renowned of them. The song was first published in 1911 and first recorded in 1923 by Waring’s Pennsylvanians. Hurt record his original version of the song five years later in 1928. Harpe plays and sings this one with perfection atop Countryman’s warm, buttery-smooth baseline. The record closes with the only non-Hurt penned track “You Are My Sunshine”, which coincidentally was performed by Hurt for the final selection of his 1970 live album on Vanguard titled “The Best of Mississippi John Hurt”. Whether one interprets this as a love song or a heartbreak song, it has been a timeless treasure over the years, and Harpe’s performance of the song is endearing.

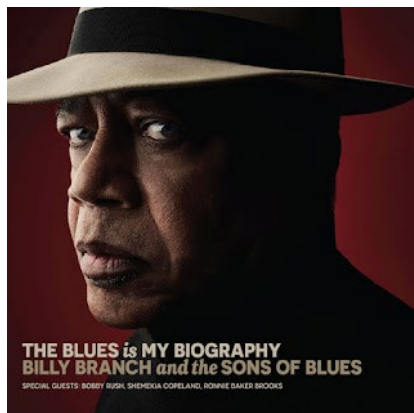
The songs of Mississippi John Hurt are true masterpieces. Erin Harpe and Jim Countryman’s tribute to this blues legend, with their recording Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me, is quite marvelous.

For more info on Erin Harpe visit the website at <https://www.erinharpe.com/>

Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues – The Blues Is My Biography (Rosa’s lounge Records)

By Phillip Smith; October 25, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



All it took was one listen to this new Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues album *The Blues is My Biography* to know it would land in the top of my favorites of 2025. Produced by Larry Batiste, this mostly autobiographical album from Branch is the first record on the new Rosa’s Lounge Records label. With over fifteen albums recorded with The Sons of the Blues, Branch’s accolades over the past 50 years make for a mesmerizing list which includes three Grammy nominations, three Blues Music Awards, an Emmy, and the induction into the Blues Hall of Fame. For this recording, The Sons of the Blues consists of

Dionte “McMusik” Skinner on drums, Sumito Ariyoshi aka Ariyo on keys, Ari Seder on bass, and Giles Corey on guitar.

Branch kicks the record off with a blast of high-level energy as Bobby Rush joins in on vocals and harmonica on “Hole in Your Soul”. I love how they spread out the history of the blues into this

one jumpin' song. With Shemekia Copeland on guest vocals and Ronnie Baker Brooks stepping in on guitar, Branch leans into the multiple facets of struggling times with "Begging For Change". The paring of their soulful voices rides a fabulous groove which pulls me in tight for a searing serving of harmonica and guitar. I love the way Branch delivers the Lou Rawls 1967 Grammy-winning song "Dead End Street". I can't help but pay full attention as his gravelly-spoken monolog is joined with a piano-centric introduction. I dig that sixties hot, buttered soul. As I'm glued in to the song, a wave of nostalgia washes over me with the mention of picking up pop bottles for money. Branch suavely delivers his title-track "Blues is My Biography" in a crooner serenade style. His silken voice sounds fantastic with his band accompanied with a horn section arranged by Batiste. "Harmonica Man", a song which Branch states "It's as autobiographical as you can get", follows next. The hypnotic rhythm invokes a Seventies vibe which brings to mind favorites of the Classic Rock era like Steely Dan. Lastly, in a magnificent flurry of funk, the instrumental "Return of the Roaches" closes the album out, hitting on all cylinders. It's a beast of a performance.

Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues have an instant-classic on their hands with *The Blues is My Biography*. It is a flawless album destined to be a favorite to many.

For more info on Billy Branch, visit the website at <https://www.billybranch.com/>

GeminiIDRAGON featuring Linwood Taylor – Moonlight Movin' & Groovin' (Nepotism Recordings)

By Phillip Smith; November 1, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



Louisiana-based GeminiIDRAGON has been on my radar and in my reviews since her album *Fightin' Fire with Fire* in 2022. Her fifth and latest release *Moonlight Movin' & Groovin'* continues to solidify my appreciation for this band. Gemini's powerful and unique, vocals really draw my attention. For this album Washington D.C.-area guitarist Linwood Taylor is brought onboard to not only play but help co-write each of the songs with GeminiIDRAGON and co-producer/guitarist Christian Simeon.

The record opens with "Blues is So Good", which also serves as the first single released off this album. With a buttery bassline, searing guitar licks, and fearless vocals, the song makes a perfect companion piece to Little Milton's "The Blues is Alright". Guitarist Santiago-Martín Chalchihuicueyatl Ortega (Santiago and The Signifiers) steps in as a guest guitarist for "Pressure"

and “Rainy Wednesday”. The rich keyboard and horn-infused landscape of “Pressure” hits me like the power-R&B songs which was one of the things I dug about the Eighties. Wait two days after “Blue Monday” and one finds themselves sitting smack dab in the middle of terrifically blues-soaked “Rainy Wednesday”. An infectious intro and driving rhythm instantly pull me in to the world of the unscrupulous “Mr. Slip & Slide Man”. I love the approach GeminiIDRAGON takes with this song as they seem to walk a line between the houses of Stax and Muscle Shoals. The album goes into full-on Mississippi Delta Blues territory when harmonica-extraordinaire Julia Dill steps in for two songs. “Blues Party” instantly puts a smile on my face as I lean into this cookin’, rip-roaring performance. And then “Juke Joint Jumpin’” brings back a flood of wonderful memories of jukin’ down in Clarksdale, Mississippi with right-on descriptions of liquor flowing, windows shaking, and good times. It’s a great song.

With a base of blues at the core, GeminiIDRAGON’s Moonlight Movin’ & Groovin’ is fortified with touches of funk and rock. It certainly makes for a delightful record which is highly conducive to getting one’s jam on.

Mud Morganfield – Deep Mud (Nola Blue Records)

By Phillip Smith; December 8, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



Deep Mud, the sixth studio album from Mud Morganfield is as real-deal Chicago Blues as it gets. Featuring twelve original tracks along with a couple dedicated to his father, the legendary Muddy Waters, this record hits like a long-lost classic. Produced by Stuebaker John, the Deep Mud features Mud on vocals with Rick Kreher on guitar, Melvin “Pooky Styx” Carlisle on drums, Stuebaker John on harmonica, Mike Wheeler on guitar, E.G. McDaniel on bass, Sumito Ariyo Ariyoshi on piano, and Roosevelt Purifoy on piano/organ. Also appearing is Rodrigo Mantovani on

upright bass, Phil Perkins on trumpet, and backing vocalists Felicia Collins, Kristen Lowe, Jacole Avent, and Demetrias M. Hall.

From the first few seconds of “Bring Me My Whiskey”, I knew this was going to be a smoldering album of blues. Kreher and Stuebaker stick the matchstick to the fuse while Pooky and E.G. keep that rhythm tight as hell. Kreher’s slide wonderfully pours on the grease. A searing harp performance and a buttery bassline build a fitting launch pad for Mud to roll “Ernestine” in with his blues-soaked voice. It wonderfully sets the stage for an immaculate piano solo from Purifoy

and a beautifully toned solo from Kreher. “Cosigner Man” is a most interesting six and half minute track. Ushered in a on a blast of brass, this song dances outside the blues lines just a smidge, as flavors of jazz intermingle through the piano and horns. I would love to hear this one live, played as a long and extended jam. I feel totally immersed in the blues when the crawling rhythm of Muddy Waters’ “Strange Woman” sweeps me away. Mud is also playing bass on this track. He sounds wonderful. The other track Mud honors is father with is “Country Boy”, I like to think of it as a follow up to “Strange Woman”. These recordings are so good, I forget they are brand new.

There’s just a handful of artists who can bring this high level of authenticity to the blues, and Mud Morganfield is definitely one of them. Deep Mud is a surefire favorite of blues records released in 2025.

For more information about Mud Morganfield, visit his website

<https://mudmorganfieldblues.com/>

Robert Top Thomas – One Morning Soon (Robert Top Thomas)

By Phillip Smith; December 27, 2025

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



One Morning Soon, the latest album from Florida-based blues veteran Robert Top Thomas, has a magical way of drawing me into the rustic, swampy country-blues landscape he has so carefully constructed. Produced by Billy Dean, this acoustic thirteen-track gem is a mix of vintage classic blues and original tunes. Appearing on the record with Thomas is Dan Walters on piano/bass, Stephen Kampa on harmonica, Billy Dean on drums/percussion/voice, Gavin Jorgenson on clarinet/soprano sax, and Sadie Dean on ‘gator bite’.

With Walters on piano, and Kampa on harp, Thomas kicks the album off in a fun boogie-fashion covering Lazy Lester’s “Hey Matte”. Thomas breathes new life into the Packrat’s Smokehouse track “Haints in My House” and it’s an absolute favorite. Black cats and buzzards abound, if a sequel to the 2025 film Sinners is to be, I’d love to hear this in the soundtrack. It would be perfect. His cover of Mance Lipscomb’s “Shake Shake Mama” is really a delight to hear. I love Thomas’ guitar and vocal approach as Kampa accompanies on harmonica. A mesmerizing rendition of Reverend Gary Davis’ “I Heard the Angels Singing” takes me to church with every listen.

Baptized in the swamps of pre-war blues, “Gator Jig” is a standout original instrumental which brilliantly ends with Sadie declaring “the alligator ate my hand”. The song has a way to putting a smile on my face. Another instrumental which grabs ahold of me is “Long Long Gone”. I love how he layers the sounds on this original track to build the listening experience. The song breathtakingly transports me aboard a passenger train heading west for adventure.

One Morning Soon is one of those recordings that reaches out and touches one’s soul. It’s pure country blues at its best.

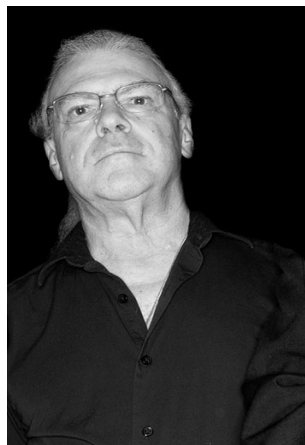
All CD Reviews are courtesy of Philip Smith. To read all Phillip’s 790 CD Reviews to date please visit the original source: www.phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



In Memoriam

by: Greg Gaughan

Paul Albrecht (May 5, 1955 – November 21, 2025)



Paul was an avid drummer on the Philadelphia music scene. He frequented the Monday Night jam session in Ardmore and was a staple band member at the Round Guys session in Lansdale, as well as Jamey's House of Music in Lansdowne, PA. Paul always treasured the opportunity to play with the fine musicians who attended. Paul loved hanging out with fellow musicians and drummers. He loved talking about Return to Forever records, Miles, Tony Williams, and all of the vintage Zildjian cymbals that he acquired over the years. He always said that jazz was his favorite music, and he wished that he had more opportunities to play. With that being said, we hope that our jam

session community offered him, at the very least, a small opportunity to make his musical mark. We appreciate the contribution that he had to our jazz family. Paul was a kind friend, a devoted and caring husband to his wife Cindy, and a respected drummer in the Philadelphia Jazz and Blues scene. He will be missed. – written by: Alex Maio

Stephen Lee Cropper (October 21, 1941 - December 3, 2025)



Steve Cropper was sometimes known as "The Colonel". He was an American guitarist, songwriter and record producer. He was the guitarist of the Stax Records house band, Booker T. & the M.G.'s, which backed artists such as Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, Carla Thomas, Rufus Thomas, Johnnie Taylor and Neil Young. He helped create some of the most enduring songs in music history, including "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," "Soul

Man," "Knock on Wood," and "In the Midnight Hour." A Grammy Award winner, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee, and Songwriters Hall of Fame honoree, Steve's influence on American music is immeasurable. He also acted as the producer of many of these artists' records. He was later a member of the Blues Brothers band. Rolling Stone magazine ranked him 36th on its list of the 100 greatest guitarists. He won two Grammy Awards out of his seven nominations.

Russ Lambert (June 9, 1960 - December 5, 2025)



Russ began playing harmonica while in the Marines at the encouragement of his commanding officer. Russ served in the Marines from 1980-1984. After being honorably discharged in 1984, Russ returned home to Berwyn, PA where he worked as a stone mason, but his true passion was his harp and the Blues. He began to form various bands and entertaining around Chester County for almost 3 decades. The music is in his heart and soul, and he strove to play as well as Little Walter, who's musicianship he admired. Russ would engage anyone who would listen, about the blues and the sorted and raucous roadhouse details that make his stories so interesting. The rich oral history is what people loved about him. He embodied the spirit of the music that inspired the songs he related to so well. He played his heart out for everyone he met. Always a harp in his pocket. Anyone seeing Russ perform could testify he drew a crowd in. He had a dedication and love for the Blues.

Dave Riley (March 18, 1949 – January 4, 2026)



Dave Riley, a native of Hattiesburg who played gospel, R&B and blues as a young man and returned to the blues in full force in the mid-'90s following experiences including combat duty in Vietnam, twenty-five years work as a guard at a maximum-security prison and kicking drug and alcohol addiction.

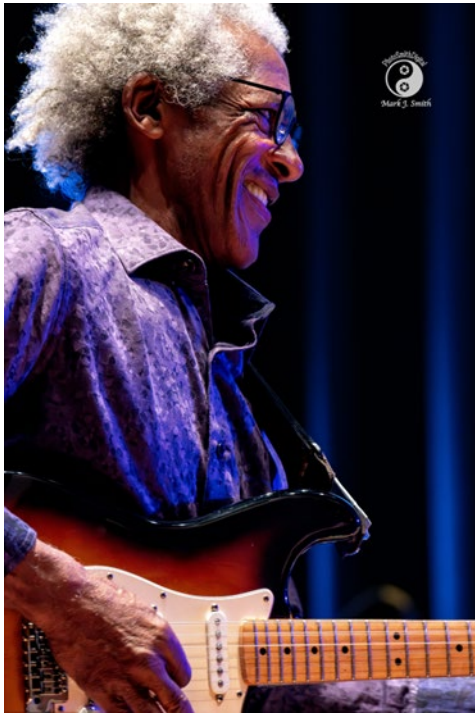
In the mid-'90s he encountered Sam Carr and Frank Frost in his wife's hometown of Helena and recorded and toured as part of Carr's Delta Jukes along with harmonica player John Weston. In 2001 he recorded an album in Oxford at Tom Queyja's Lip Studio. Riley later found a great partner in Bob Corritore, touring and recording multiple albums together. – written by: Scott Barretta

**Photos from the 1st Annual Philadelphia Blues Society's Blues Festival
October 11, 2025 - Photos by: Mark Smith & Greg Gaughan**











Philadelphia Blues Society Festival Photos in the order they appear

- 1. Our Headliner – Solomon Hicks (lead guitar & vocals) with Kirk Yano (bass) & Gary Ferguson (drums)**
- 2. Billy the Kid & The Regulators featuring Philadelphia Slim (harmonica)**
- 3. Derek Matteson aka Philadelphia Slim (harmonica)**
- 4. Matt Daniels (guitar) – Mikey Junior Band**
- 5. Mikey Junior (harmonica)**
- 6. Erin Harpe's Country Blues Duo featuring Jim Countryman**
- 7. Zach Lees (guitar) – Mikey Junior Band**
- 8. Jimmy Pritchard (bass) – Mikey Junior Band**
- 9. Kate Gaffney & Frank McKitty – The Philly Blues Kings**
- 10. Clarence Spady (lead guitar & vocals) – The Philly Blues Kings**
- 11. Joey Stout (Hammond B3 & Keyboard) – The Philly Blues Kings
(kneein' the Hammond during the Finale)**
- 12. Jeffrey Attakorah (drummer) – Billy the Kid & The Regulators**
- 13. Danielle Miraglia (acoustic guitar & harmonica)**
- 14. Russ Joelle (drummer) – The Philly Blues Kings**
- 15. Jamey Reilly (bass) – The Philly Blues Kings**
- 16. The Finale featuring Solomon Hicks, Joey Stout, Erin Harpe, Mikey Junior, Jamey Reilly, Max Schang, Derek Matteson, and Gary Ferguson**
- 17. Gina's Amazing Cupcakes (vendor)**
- 18. Philadelphia Blues Society's Merchandise Table**

Philadelphia Blues Society's 1st Annual Christmas Party

"The Final Jam of 2025"

Photos by: Greg Gaughan



Roger Girke Band with Nick Kane



Roger Girke with Nick Kane



Roger Girke Band with Nick Kane



Roger Girke Band with Nick Kane & Derek Matteson



Roger Girke Band with Nick Kane & Derek Matteson