



BLUE NOTES!

A bi-monthly publication of the SACRAMENTO BLUES SOCIETY

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2021
ISSUE 42
VOL. 5



President's Column

By Sally Katen



During the last eighteen months, we've all been highly impacted by the COVID pandemic in many ways. Just like everyone else, the Sacramento Blues Society found ways to continue our contributions to the blues community and our community at large, despite the lack of live, in-person shows and other events.

The SBS Board of Directors has been working all year to make your Sacramento Blues Society a better organization for all our members. We have a new, upgraded website at sacblues.org. We continued to produce our bi-monthly newsletter, the *Blue Notes*, which you can receive in the mail or view online. There are ongoing articles with a new musician in each BN called "A Casual Conversation with (artist)" that has featured such diverse artists as Terry Hanck, June Core, Lara Chavez and Harpdog Brown. We've also published relevant blues articles, CD reviews and updates on all our Committee activities.

Even though we didn't have any in-person events in 2020 or early 2021, we have presented several events online for your enjoyment. Blues in the Schools (BITS) produced three videos for online assemblies, and then connected with the John Lee Hooker Foundation to produce an online event called *Journey through the Blues*, which featured major blues artists, including Charlie Musselwhite, Rick Estrin, Elvin Bishop, Tommy Castro, Mark Hummel, and daughter and Executive Director of the JLH Foundation, Zakiya Hooker. We also produced an online live streaming event at Harlow's for our members, featuring member band *Red's Blues*.

The BITS Committee held our first "live" event this year last May at the Stoney Inn for the Big Day of Giving, which was live-streamed, as well as performed for an in-person audience. We held a fundraiser at the Torch Club on July 18th with featured band *Mark Hum-*

mel's Blues Survivors. We have produced a SBS Member Band CD called *Back in Business* which we debuted at a CD release party on August 21st at the Dante Club. We have the upcoming Hall of Fame Induction occurring on September 26th and are planning our Annual Membership Meeting/Holiday party in December. We have also updated our merchandise and now have SBS masks, pins, hats, totes, scarfs, tanks and the regular T-shirts and sweatshirts, which you can also buy online at our new website sacblues.org. Check it out and see what you have been missing.

One of the reasons I'm detailing all we've been up to is that I recently received a communication from a member who wanted their membership extended until next year just because they were not able to get their discounts at events. My thoughts: hmmm, we may

2021 Committee Chairs

Blues in the Schools - Rick Snyder

Hall of Fame - Sally Katen

Events - Mindy Giles

Membership - Linda McShane

Sponsorships/Fundraising - Doug Pringle

Public Relations & Social Media - Mindy Giles

Volunteer Coordinator - Open

Big Day of Giving - Rick Snyder

Donor Gifts - Sally Katen

Blue Notes Newsletter - Cari Chenkin & Jan Kelley

IBC Competition - Open

Webmaster - Mindy Giles

Board of Directors Development - Doug Pringle

Help keep the Blues alive - Contact a Chair or Board Member to volunteer for the Board or a Committee!

The Sacramento Blues Society (SBS) is one of the oldest blues societies in California, founded in 1979. SBS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed to preserve and promote blues music as an art form. SBS has kept the blues tradition alive in the Sacramento area by promoting the local blues music scene, bringing internationally renowned artists to the region, acknowledging our local blues artists, providing a Musicians' Crisis Fund and publishing the **Blue Notes** six times a year. SBS is an affiliate member of The Blues Foundation (which honored us with a 2015 Keeping the Blues Alive Award) which provides educational opportunities for young people with The Blues Foundation's "Blues in The Schools" Program.

Board of Directors Meetings - 2nd Tuesday of each Month, 7:00 p.m.

All SBS Members in good standing are invited to attend.

For more details, including meeting location, check: www.sacblues.org

2021 Board of Directors

Sally Katen, President

Barbara Katen, Vice President

Secretary - TBD

Renee Erickson Sullivan, Treasurer

Rex Smith, Parliamentarian

Cari Chenkin

Rick Snyder

Chris Clark

Dana Moret

Jim Coats

Sacramento Blues Society Publications

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President's Column, con't. from P.2

not have been able to do a lot of events in 2020 or even 2021, but we have still been active and working to provide opportunities for our members to enjoy the blues. No matter what the circumstances, we're committed to making the Sacramento Blues Society a better Society!

Blues In The Schools (BITS) Update

by Rick Snyder, BITS Chairman

"Blues in the Schools" Is Still Alive and Well!

And then some! We have been meeting with our teachers to plan for in-classroom sessions and our after-school program, to give the next generation of blues players a solid foundation. More on that after we see what happens with the new Zombie Apocalypse.



August was John Lee Hooker Month. We (SBS BITS) are partnered with the John Lee Hooker Foundation (JLHF) to raise funds for both organizations via our online presentation of *A Journey Through the Blues*, featuring local and touring artists performing their versions of John's songs. SBS merchandise and JLHF merchandise in support of this online event are available through links we provide. We also have some classic John Lee Hooker CDs for sale and giveaway. Check it out at <https://bit.ly/JLHMonth> and <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/ajourneythroughtheblues>.

We are always on the lookout for sponsors and advertisers (a portion of all advertising receipts for Rico's Blues News goes to BITS). We are currently producing a video to use in "pitching" to potential sponsors and advertisers which illustrates what we do and the benefits for those who participate.

Call for Volunteers - SBS Board of Directors Elections Coming in December!

As Fall nears, it's once again time for the SBS to plan for its annual election of our Board of Directors. Traditionally, the election takes place on the date of our Annual Membership Meeting and Holiday Party, sometime in early December (actual date TBD). Despite last year's election being entirely conducted by mail-in ballot due to the pandemic, this year we have high hopes for being able to hold our Meeting/Party live and in-person! Stay tuned for details, and if you're curious about what the Board does and why you may want to join it, please see the article below.

We Want You! By Doug Pringle

Your society has openings on the Board of Directors. Do you love the blues? Do you support our mission to preserve and promote the blues as an American art form? Are you interested?



Our Board of Directors (Board) is an active, working one. We are well aware of the limited time people have these days for volunteer service. In that spirit, we make every effort to ensure that the time spent by our Board is well used and results-oriented. Individual Board members believe in what they are doing and have fun doing it. And become friends along the way!

The Board screens prospects and confirms them as viable candidates for presentation to the membership for election by votes from

the members. Office holders are later elected by the Board. If a vacancy occurs during the year, that seat will be filled immediately by Board vote and the new member will serve on the Board until the expiration of the term of the Director they replaced.

The most valuable assets you can bring to your Board are compassion, an open mind, a willingness to pitch in wherever needed and a positive attitude. Even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference. (You can also help keep the blues alive by joining one or more of our committees, helping with one of our events or by staffing our display and membership table at live blues shows.)

Volunteering to serve on our Board of Directors offers vital aid to the SBS and the community helping make it a better place. It's been said that giving in even simple ways can reduce stress, combat depression, keep you mentally stimulated and provide a sense of purpose.

As a Board member you are expected to be a member in good standing, to prepare for and attend monthly 90-minute meetings (either via videoconference or in person) on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m., donate according to your ability and serve on at least one committee. Our committees are listed on our website: www.sacblues.org

To volunteer to run for election to the Board, please email our Board Development committee chair Doug Pringle at: sacramentoblues1979@gmail.com, by October 1st. We'll need a statement about yourself, why you want to serve, and a headshot photo for publication in our newsletter. And thank you!

Sacramento Blues Society Presents "Blue Sundays"!

Your Board of Directors has created a new program to show our member bands the love! The Torch Club has generously offered us a special time slot on a monthly basis, which we will use to showcase our member bands! So, the last Sunday of each month, from 4 to 7 pm, will be the SBS's "Blue Sundays". Each month we'll hire one of our member bands (yes, this is a PAYING gig!) to perform at the Torch.

Val Starr and the Blues Rocket kicked off the series on August 29, we've booked *Julie and the Jukes* for October 31, and as we go to press, we're working on the shows for November and December. (No "Blue Sundays" show on September 26, because that's our Hall of Fame Induction After-party at the Torch, which follows the induction of the Class of 2021 into the SBS Hall of Fame.)

Admission to these special shows is only \$10 for SBS members (\$12 for the general public). Why not plan to come by the Torch Club on the last Sunday of the month, and get to know our member bands? We've got some really talented musicians and you just might find your next favorite band!



SMILE!

Support the Sacramento Blues Society by shopping at Amazon Smile. You get all the same pages as "regular" Amazon - and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of all eligible smile.amazon.com purchases to the Sacramento Blues Society!

Just go to smile.amazon.com, go to Your Account & follow instructions to select SBS as your charity of choice, and keep on shopping!
Thank you for your support!

SBS Guitar Raffle Is Back!

Back before the full brunt of the COVID pandemic was felt, in the May-June 2020 issue of the *Blue Notes*, we announced plans to raffie off a special and unique guitar. SBS member Craig Christensen donated his Charvel electric guitar, signed by all the members of the Papa Roach band.

Well, you know what happened – everything shut down, and there were no live events where we could display the guitar and sell raffle tickets. So it's been sleeping in its case, patiently waiting for the day when, like Sleeping Beauty, it would awaken and dazzle us with its glory.

That time has come, and we'll be showing the guitar at every SBS event, and every blues event where we have space to do so. Raffle tickets are for sale for **\$5 each, or five tickets for \$20.**

Be sure to come by the table and take a look at it at our Hall of Fame event and the Torch Club after party, as well as at our "Blue Sundays" events at the Torch Club.

We'll sell tickets through the rest of the year and if we sell enough raffle tickets by then, we'll draw the winning ticket at our Annual Membership Meeting/Holiday Party in December (date TBD).

Proceeds from this raffle will be split between our Blues in the Schools fund and the SBS general funds. So, save up those \$5 bills - all it takes is just ONE lucky ticket, and that guitar could be yours!



SBS Hall of Fame Welcomes the Class of 2021 Inductees!

Getting the HOF Inductees' bios and photos ready for our big event has been a labor of love. A big thank you to Jan Kelley for all her great help in editing the bios and to Bob Cosman for preparing everyone's photos for the *Blue Notes*, the website and for prints to hang on the Torch Club wall! All bios in the current *Blue Notes* are shorter than what you'll see at sacblues.org, so for more in-depth information, please visit the website.

It is with great pleasure the Sacramento Blues Society Introduces the 2021 SBS Hall of Fame Inductees:

Bobby "Blues" Ray	Charles Washington
Greg Roberts	James Winegan
Mindy Giles	Paris Clayton
Ronnie James Weber	Sally Katen

Congratulations to all **eight** of this year's Inductees! We hope to see you all at **Harlow's on Sunday, September 26 at 1 pm**, and then at the **Torch Club for the after-party at 6 pm**. For tickets: <https://www.harlows.com/event/2021-sacramento-blues-society-hall-of-fame-awards/>.

Bobby "Blues" Ray began performing professionally in the 60s at age 16, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the many music venues available at that time. This eventually led to a chance of a lifetime when he was asked to open for B.B. King and Bobby "Blue" Bland at the Memorial Auditorium in 1972. The promoter dubbed the trio; the "King, the Premier, and the Knight of the Blues". The nickname stuck and is the title of his latest CD, *Bobby "Blues" Ray, Blues Knight of the West Coast*. He would open for well-known artists, such as Lowell Fulson, Johnny Heartsman, and Albert King, playing up and down California through the 80s. Bobby has performed on several occasions at the Heritage Festival, Po' Boz Sports Bar, Sam's Hof Brau, and Access TV. He particularly enjoyed participating in the Blues In The Schools program with Guitar Mac and the late Peppermint Harris.



Charles Washington was born in 1938 in Texas to a family of sharecroppers. His love of blues music began by listening to the radio, blues albums, and going to live music in clubs as a young man. After a 20-year stint in the Air Force, Charles moved his family to Sacramento and sought out live blues. It was there that Charles discovered the many venues that featured the blues, the Sacramento Blues Society and the Sacramento Blues Festival, which was produced by Phil Givant, the early founder of the SBS.

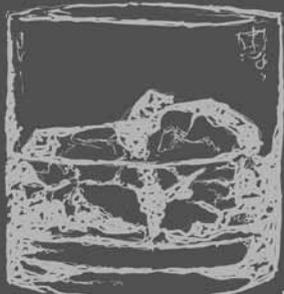


Charles joined the SBS and became immersed in the blues by volunteering for any blues event he could, which included many years with the Blues Festival. He loved the blues so much he was an officer on the Board of Directors many times. He served three full terms as President, two terms as Vice-President, and was Parliamentarian for several years.

As a young guitarist in 1983, **Greg Roberts** met and was mentored by the legendary Johnny "Guitar" Knox. Around the same time, Greg learned the upright bass and was soon backing Johnny in busking and playing clubs, later appearing on Johnny's 1991 live

BLUES & BOURBON WEDNESDAYS AT THE STARLET

IN MIDTOWN (ABOVE HARLOW'S)
(2708 J ST. SACRAMENTO)



WE'RE BACK!

SEPTEMBER 8TH:
ANDY SANTANA & THE WEST COAST PLAYBOYS
\$12: GA / \$10: SBS MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 15TH:
TERRY HANCK BAND
\$15: GA / \$12: SBS MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 22ND:
VAL STARR & THE BLUES ROCKET
\$12: GA / \$10: SBS MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 29TH:
ZEN VOODOO
\$12: GA / \$10: SBS MEMBERS

VAX CARDS & MASKS REQUIRED @ THE DOOR

LITUPDOWN & LOWDOWN. 2 SETS OF BLUES, DRINKS/FOOD & DANCE FLOOR. 6:30PM DOORS / 4:30PM SHOW
COMING IN OCTOBER: HAROLD SESSIONS TRIO, RED'S BLUES, BLIND LEMON PEE'S HALLOWEEN SPECTACULAR & MORE!



Hall of Fame, Greg Roberts, con't. from P. 4 recording *Hoboin'*.

In the early 90s, Greg played in an 8-piece swing band called *Spider Smith & the Sinister Seven*, and founded *The Hucklebucks* with Spider's guitarist Robert Sidwell along with Doug Crumpacker and Bill Larock. In the late 90s he toured with *The Chrome Addicts* to Moscow, played often with Rusty Zinn and R.J. Mischo in the Bay Area, and founded the *Maxwell Street Revivalists* in Seattle.



Greg has backed many touring veterans of the blues, including Lazy Lester and Honeyboy Edwards. He gigged with Kim Wilson, Nathan James, James Harman, and other great Southern California musicians while in San Diego. Returning to Sacramento, he began backing local musicians Ray "Catfish" Copeland, Andy Santana, Kyle Rowland, and others and has recently formed *The Harold Sessions Trio*.



James Winegan taught himself to play harmonica while in high school in 1967. In 1969, he met and began playing with the great John Lee Hooker, touring with him whenever he could get away from college.

Relocating to Sacramento, James met Derek Washington and started his first band with Washington called the *Blues Crusaders*, later to be renamed the *Bluesaders*. James soon began singing lead, combating his shyness out

of necessity. Picked up by the *Dave Bonds Band* later and then the band *Everyday People*, James also became vocalist and harmonica player for the *Johnny Heartsman Band*, with whom he traveled to Europe several times. James also played with Lowell Fulson and Omar Sharriff. James has played at the Dixieland Jazz Festival, the Sacramento Blues Festival, and in many Heritage Festivals, bars and clubs in Sacramento, including Sam's Hof Brau on J Street where his band was the house band for several years.

Mindy Giles has 40+ years in the music business in artist management, record labels, publicity, marketing and being an event promoter in three cities - Chicago, New Orleans, and Sacramento. She is a 39-year voting member of The Recording Academy.



Mindy has a lengthy list of credentials with many well-known record companies, including Polygram, Alligator, Rounder and Black Top. She has co-executive produced albums with Lonnie Mack, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Maria Muldaur and has written bios and liner notes, provided photographs, and authored the book, *Really the Blues* (1996, Woodford Publishing). She has written for *Pulse! Magazine*, *Blues Revue*, *Blues Access*, *Big City Blues* and *Sacramento News & Review* and managed/directed careers of a plethora of international blues and roots artists.

Tower Records brought her to Sacramento to be Marketing Director for Bayside Entertainment Distribution in 1997, thus leading her into becoming a vital part of the music scene in the area. She produced the Main Stage at the annual Sacramento Music Festival and the Isleton Cajun & Blues Fest, and has served in numerous roles that now include the Sacramento Blues Society's Blues in the Schools projects. Mindy has been serving as the Publicist and Events Com-

mittee Chair for the SBS since 2018.

Paris Clayton began playing professionally in the band *The Vibrations*, formed his own bands over the years and played bass for many blues legends, including Albert King, Henry Townsend, and Chuck Berry. Touring for 10 years, he headlined and opened for bands like *The Who* and *The Eagles*.



In Los Angeles, Paris worked for 20 years as a session singer and musician, formed a band to back up Willie Dixon, John "Juke" Logan, William Clarke, and other artists for a series of fund raising concerts and cemented a friendship with Willie Dixon, who got him involved with the Blues in the Schools program there.

When Paris moved to Sacramento he connected with the Sacramento Blues Society. Paris has worked extensively with the SBS' local Blues in the Schools projects, producing the CD *Life*, which used lyrics written by the students. He released his own solo CD *Hip Trash - Blues, Soul, and Rock and Roll* and produced the late Marshal Wilkerson's final CD, *Remember Me*.

Paris was a founding member of the *Sacramento Blues Revue* and as a producer Paris has recorded many CD's for local artists. He won the Sacramento Blues Society's Best Self-Produced CD for *There's a Party Goin' On*.



Blues bassist **Ronnie James Weber** joined Mark Hummel's band in the early 1990s, which enabled him to back masters like Muddy Waters' guitarist Jimmy Rogers, Billy Boy Arnold, Luther Tucker, and Snooky Pryor. He was recruited into the *Fabulous Thunderbirds'* front man Kim Wilson's solo blues project, then joined the band he toured the world with for many years.

Ronnie was a member of *Little Charlie & The Nightcats* for 10 years, touring and recording with them for Alligator Records, including backing John Hammond on the Grammy-nominated CD *Long As I Have You*.

Ronnie played and recorded with numerous bands, including Jimmie Vaughan's *Tilt-A-Whirl Band* and Jimmie and Omar Dykes' band *The Jimmy Reed Highway*. He played on Jimmie's CD *Blues, Ballads, and Favorites*, and its sequel, *More Blues, Ballads, and Favorites*, both of which were nominated for Grammy awards. He also played with Gary Clark Jr., including Gary's showcase for Warner Brothers and appeared with Gary in an episode of the TV show "Friday Night Lights".

In 1999, **Sally Katen** learned she had breast cancer, so along with her friend Marina Texeira, owner of the Torch Club, she and Marina produced a blues show at the Torch Club to generate funds for the Susan G. Komen Foundation. They brought together local blues bands and a headliner from the Bay Area, all volunteering for this worthy cause. CDs entitled *Blues for the Cure* were made of each live show that had become an annual event for seven years.



Sally has served on the SBS Board of Directors and as Board Secretary from 2006 to 2010, at which time she formed and became

Hall of Fame, Sally Katen, con't. from P. 5

the Chair of the Hall of Fame Committee. Under her direction and leadership, the HOF has become a gala annual event.

Sally is currently serving her second term as SBS President. In addition to these activities, she has also assumed the responsibility for the SBS merchandise and volunteer coordination.

CD Review

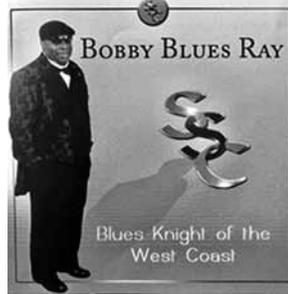
Blues Knight of the West Coast - Bobby "Blues" Ray

(Sac Soul Records)

By Gregg Jamnetski

Smooth vocalist - could've easily done this album acapella; backup is killer band that has Blues idiom down with/without vocals.

Bobby "Blues" Ray's new album, *Bobby Blues Ray - Blues Knight of the West Coast*, offers a wide array of emotions and he brings them all forward in an even and straightforward way on this CD. Listeners will get to share that journey and get to know and like this bluesman and his music.



Take "Driving Wheel", the first cut on this first-rate CD. A horn ensemble comes crashing down on the listener, then pauses just a beat for BBR to come on, accompanied by a definitive drumbeat. Kenny Marchese's guitar accentuates Ray's commanding voice and declarations - he's gonna take care of his woman, she has nothing to worry about. Jim Monroe's piano adds a very nice balance. It's no accident that this is the opening cut. It's hard not to roll and shift and get lost in this rich piece of blues music.

The second cut, Sam Cooke's "Somebody Have Mercy", has an unmistakable Motown vibe with all the charm and funk of that signature sound. It's a nice reminder that a great sound always has an audience.

The third cut, "Everyday I Have the Blues", has an uncertain origin but has been played by countless blues artists since the 1930's. It's one of my favorites and in Ray's hands reminds me of a comment once made about the late, great jazz pianist Oscar Peterson, that he was very generous in sharing playing time with his trio. BBR is just as kind on this album. Guitarist Marchese opens the song with a crisp drum accompaniment. After getting the listener all worked up, BBR forcefully laments having the blues as Marchese chimes in offering a great sequence of guitar responses, just to make sure the point is driven home. While definitively in the domain of the blues, there's an almost classic jazz tempo to it. I love the complexity of this composition and I don't think any listener will sit still while listening to it - I certainly couldn't.

Cut 5, "Somewhere Down the Line", is a tune whose origins are murky, as there are many songs with the same title. It opens with the inestimable Rick Estrin on harmonica and is quickly backed up by drummer Jeff Minniweather. It's quick-paced and catchy. Bobby "Blues" Ray really extends his considerable range on this song, which stands out even on an album of eight other good cuts.

The seventh cut, "Mean Old World", is my favorite, the one I play over and over. BBR is on and in a serious blues mood. His use of tone accentuates the lyrics which articulate a life experience to

which we can all relate. Just about every musician credited on the album adds something. It's a full-on and knowing tone-poem.

The album's closing track, "Get Real Clean", features a horn backup and another great collaboration by Kenny Marchese on guitar. Bobby steps back a bit to let the sax and guitar tell part of the story. Never far from his roots, BBR sings in an almost upbeat manner. It's blues with tons of improvisation and guitar/sax pyrotechnics and a singer that sets a lighter tone in his goodbye to the listener. Thanks, BBR, I loved it.

Presented by TC King Live Entertainment

SACRAMENTO'S 11TH ANNUAL BLUES BY THE RIVER

Welcome Back!!!
 October 2, 2021
 12:00pm - 4:00pm
 SS/TBA

Christmas for Kids Blues Raffle!!!

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IN MIDTOWN (ABOVE HARLOW'S)
 (2708 J ST. SACRAMENTO)

OCTOBER 2021 SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 6TH:
HAROLD SESSIONS TRIO
 \$12: GA / \$10: SBS MEMBERS

OCTOBER 13TH:
TBA

OCTOBER 20TH:
RED'S BLUES
 \$12: GA / \$10: SBS MEMBERS

OCTOBER 27TH:
BLIND LEMON PEEL'S HALLOWEEN SPECTACULAR
 \$18: GA / \$15: SBS MEMBERS

VAX CARDS & MASKS REQUIRED @ THE DOOR

UPTOWN & LOWDOWN, 2 SETS OF BLUES, DRINKS/FOOD & DANCE FLOOR, 9:30PM DOORS / 6:30PM SHOW
 COMING IN NOVEMBER: LISA PHENIX BAND, LUCKY LOSERS & MORE!

In Memoriam

Marshal Delano Wilkerson - January 21, 1939 – July 5, 2021

A Life in Review – A husband first, a singer second and always a gentleman

Marshal Wilkerson passed peacefully on July 5th after living a life of dignity, kindness, and dedication.

Born in Shreveport, LA in 1939, Marshal was the middle child of five children. He recalled singing at a very early age at the local store where he sang “When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano”, and was paid in cookies.

When Marshal was five years old his family left Shreveport and moved to Los Angeles, where Marshal spent his youth. During high school, he ran track as a sprinter and long jumper at Thomas Jefferson High School, and was a classmate of Etta James.

After high school, Marshal served in the United States Air Force for four years, where he was lead vocalist in a military band

The Continentals and later sang with a touring Air Force show, “*Tops in Blue*,” that performed throughout the north-east and south.

Upon his discharge from the Air Force, he started college at Southern University in Baton Rouge, eventually finishing his studies at Antioch University in

Los Angeles, earning a bachelor's degree in Urban Planning.

Marshal's career included work with several LA-based agencies that were community-based addiction treatment centers for disadvantaged people. He then worked for the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs for 27 years, where he was known for being a wise humanitarian, a great listener, an "out of the box" thinker, and an effective problem solver.

Marshal met Inez, the love of his life, in Los Angeles in the late 1960s. They married and remained a devoted couple up until the time of her death in 2019. Marshal and Inez left southern California in 1986 so Marshal could take a promotion with the state in Sacramento, where he worked until retiring in 2001.

Before retiring, Marshal decided to start singing again, so in 1998 he joined the “Weekend Warriors,” a program for “mature” musicians who were eager to start playing again. It was there that Marshal formed the band, *Marshal Law*, which performed in Sacramento area clubs, Juneteenth celebrations and community festivals.

In 2000 the band represented the Sacramento Blues Society in the International Blues Challenge in Memphis and was also nominated for a Sammie Award. The band continued performing until 2005 when Marshal pivoted and started *Smoked Sugar* and joined *The Sacramento Blues Revue* as a featured vocalist.

Marshal not only started and joined bands - he also was a frequent attendee at jam sessions. His presence, along with Inez, became

a fixture at area jam sessions. Despite the progression of Inez's dementia, Marshal always treated her like a queen, with love and devotion. Marshal and Inez were truly a 50-year love story.

As one of the three featured Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame vocalists with *The Sacramento Blues Revue*, Marshal performed regularly with the band from their 2004 inception until their final performance in 2018. The band recorded a live CD, *Live at the 2008 Northern California Blues Festival*. That same year, the Sacramento Blues Revue won a Sammie Award for “Best Blues Band.”

In 2014, Marshal was inducted into the Sacramento Blues Society's Hall of Fame. He and Inez stole the show by arriving, splendidly attired, in a fancy horse and buggy as their mode of transportation.

In 2015, Marshal released a CD, *Back to California* under the band name *Propaganda*. The CD was a two-year recording endeavor and featured 10 original songs. The band played gigs around town but was mainly a recording project. The CD and tracks are available on Spotify,



Apple Music and Amazon.

Inez passed away in 2019 and left an understandable void in Marshal's life. In that same year, he recorded what was to be his final CD *Remember Me*, a tribute to his beloved Inez. This CD contains nine tracks of cover songs, like “Old Love” and “Missing You,” and the CD's title track, “Remember Me” co-written by Marshal. Listen to and download tracks at: www.tamtracks.com.



When the pandemic hit in 2020, killing the live music scene, Marshal's health also began to fail. In honor of his 82nd birthday, a group of family and friends decided to surprise him with a drive-by birthday celebration at William Land Park. There were over 35 gaily decorated cars filled with family and friends ready to surprise Marshal.

Marshal was sitting in the car with his daughter when the parade of birthday-decorated vehicles with horns honking slowly passed by. It wasn't until the sixth car passed that he realized he knew everyone! He innocently asked, “Is this for me?” and the cat was out of the bag! According to Marshal's daughter, he was incredibly moved and said it was his best birthday.

This was to be his last birthday celebration. Marshal passed peacefully on July 5th. He is survived by a sister and brother, sisters-in-law, three daughters, five grandsons, 13 grandchildren, cousins, nieces, nephews and many, many friends. There will be an online virtual celebration of Marshal's life on **Sunday, 9/5/21**. The link will be <https://tinyurl.com/MarshalMemorial>, and a memorial jam in

Marshal Wilkerson, con't. from P. 7

Marshal's honor will be held when it is safe to gather. So, until the swallows return to Capistrano, Godspeed, dear friend.

SBS Live Music Benefit Show Review Mark Hummel and Friends Bring the Magic!

By Rick Snyder

Photos by Steve Martarano and Rick Snyder

Wow, what a show Sunday, July 18! My head is still buzzing from the eclectic blend of Blues presented by Mark Hummel et al.! From his most current tunes to tunes off his new release on Electro-Fi Records, *Wayback Machine*, Mark kept your toes tapping and feet moving out on the dance floor from beginning to end.

Now you may say that folks were starved for live entertainment and champing at the bit to get out of the house. You would be correct in that statement. However, live music had been back for several



weeks when Mark and the boys hit the stage.

The house at the Torch Club was packed due to the harp playing of Mark Hummel, the guitar work of Rusty Zinn and Bob Welch (and keys), and the rhythm section comprised of Wes Starr on the skins and Randy Bermudes on bass.

Bandleader Mark has an original style all his own, while never failing to



Photo by Steve Martarano © 2021

integrate each member of the band into the framework and giving each their moment in the spotlight. Do you want to talk about tone?

Guitar players always want to talk about tone. Mark's harp had a great tone, literally talking at times. At times you had to look up to see if a sax player had joined the guys on stage as Mark was doing sax fills and solos with the Tin Sandwich.

Rusty and Bob each had their own unique guitar style that not only complemented one another but flawlessly moved from simple and straightforward to flashbang without missing a beat. Multi-instrumentalist Bob Welch tickled the keys until you wanted to laugh with joy.



Photo by Rico © 2021

As a highlight of the show, Mark invited SBS HOF member R. W. Grigsby to sit in for a few songs.

From "St. James Infirmary" to "Sugar Never was so Sweet" to "The Creeper Returns" to "Pepper Mama" and more, the band's set cov-

ered the traditional to the semi-modern, slow to fast-paced. The set list was well-paced, had a great rhythm to it, and kept you tapping your toes and moving your feet!



Editor's Note: Not only was the July 18th show a great time, but it also successfully raised money for the SBS, so we'll be able to continue bringing great programs and artists to the blues community!

Live Music Show Review Tribute to the Late Ron Thompson

By Jan Kelley

Photos by Bob Cosman

July 31, 2021 Empress Theatre, Vallejo, CA

What an extraordinary night! Standing in line for over an hour waiting to enter, we mingled with strangers and others we hadn't seen in over two years, not minding one bit. The sold-out show was a benefit for the Alameda Food Bank and MusiCares.

The Empress Theatre and the producers required attendees to provide proof of vaccination against Covid 19 and a picture ID, and we happily obliged. This event was a celebration not only of a fantastic



musician's life but a first-time indoor music event for many of the attendees, some of whom wore masks too.

Ron Thompson had passed away February

15, 2020; however a memorial couldn't be held due to the Covid 19 pandemic that was keeping everyone home. Once vaccines became readily available, it became possible to hold a tribute to him.

Ron was born in Oakland, CA and became a prolific blues and blues rock guitarist, singer and songwriter, working mainly in the Bay Area most of his career. His discography includes nine albums he released on major labels, with his second album *Resistor Twister* earning a Grammy nomination. Ron worked with many major blues stars over the years, continuing to perform despite recurring health issues.

This night brought many of those stars to the stage to pay tribute to him. Performers included: **Tommy Castro and the Painkillers** with

Ron Thompson Tribute, con't. from P. 8

sweetheart **Deanna Bogart** on keys, **Lady Bianca**, **Rusty Zinn**, **Jr. Watson**, **Steve Freund**, **Frank Goldwasser**, **Red's Blues**, **Larry Vann**, the phenomenal guitarist **Rudy Parris** and **Terry**



Hanck with **Johnny "Cat" Soubrand**. And let's not forget fantastic drummer **June Core** and bassist **Kedar Roy!** Harp master **Mark Hummel** was producer and performer and **Mick Martin** emceed. Also performing were fellow harpists **Dave Earl**, **Gary Smith**, and **Neil Barnes**. If I left anyone out, my apologies.



What a showcase of blues talent! The love everyone felt bounced off the walls and we all found it difficult to leave at show's end. RIP Ron Thompson. You will live on through your music!

CD Review

Uncivil War - Shemekia Copeland

(Alligator Records)

By Gregg Jamnetski

"It may be my name on the songs," says manager-songwriter John Hahn, who speaks with Copeland constantly about topics she wishes to address. "But it's her heart, and it's her feelings, and it's her thoughts and it's her opinions that I'm expressing."¹



It's this quote from songwriter/producer Hahn, in reference to an earlier Shemekia Copeland album, that gives the listener a key insight into appreciating *Uncivil War*, Ms. Copeland's latest powerhouse album. It's a collaboration between the vocalist, songwriter Hahn and musician/producer Will Kimbrough. In these steady hands, *Uncivil War* is a passionate blues album of a contemporary sort in that it reflects the conflicts of our time: racism, political conflict and animosity, gun violence and gender bias. It's not enough to describe this album as contemporary. It's so much more. Most immediately, it's a lyricist's tour de force.

At all times, the musical backup of the vocalist's singing is in attuned to each song's lyrics, though there are few musician breakouts into

improvisation as listeners often find in the blues of Toronzo Cannon, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Albert King, or Muddy. Instead, the music of *Uncivil War* hews closely to the lyrics and the singer's inflections.

In other words, in this album, WORDS are king, lyrics rule the way, and in terms of *Uncivil War*, that's not a bad thing at all. Most of these songs are tone poems of the highest order, perfectly balanced in rhythm and rhyme. This is the rare album I've played so often that I've inadvertently committed some of the songs to memory.

While there are a few songs in this album that are taken from the traditional blues songbook of unrequited love, infidelity, and rejection, for the most part this is a blues album of protest. Copeland's commitment to these themes is reflected in the passion of her singing. While she strains a bit and goes a bit flat when singing in the higher registers, her belief in and devotion to each song's meaning is clear to the listener, and never in doubt. There's a sharp, rhythmic sensibility to the lyrics in this album and a powerful poignancy to their meanings; the vocalist and her supporting musicians meld perfectly into each song.

Here's a sampling of just a few of the album's cuts.

"Clotilda's on Fire":

*She's comin' for you, hear the chains rattle,
Turn you into a slave, another piece of chattel,
Show no mercy, she was Satan's daughter.*

The Clotilda was a slave ship that was burned and sunk in the Alabama River after a slave run to destroy evidence of its existence. In 2019, confirmed findings established its whereabouts.

The song begins with a solitary drum beat that segues into a doleful guitar chord that's quickly accompanied by a rhythm guitar. With that, the Clotilda's fate and its story unfolds in quick tempo and memorable lyrics.

"Walk Until I Ride"

*Clouds opened up, rain pourin' from the sky,
I'm in the air, tryin' to flag a ride,
But the cabs don't go to my part of town,
They just passin' me by not even slowin' down,
So I'm gonna walk until I ride, I'm keepin' my head held high...*

The opening notes are distinctly church/gospel in tone. As the song progresses, there is also the uplifting tone of an asserted dignity, of a drive to prevail in the face of institutional racism. This is the poem-story of a young mom trying to catch a cab or an ambulance to take her feverish baby to the emergency room, and she will not be denied.

Shemekia Copeland, daughter of West Texas blues man Johnny Copeland, was born in Harlem where her father moved the family to advance his career. She still lives in the area. In short, Ms. Copeland knows what she's talking about in this song.

"Uncivil War"

The song opens with an acoustic guitar that is eerily reminiscent of the kind of folk tune one might hear in the mid to late 19th century i.e., during the Civil War. If that point wasn't clear, the album artwork looks very much like a period daguerreotype. The song is a commentary on the current toxic political dialogues in our country. It's a powerful song and I found it compelling that in Joe Biden's Inaugural speech after the 2020 elections, he mentioned the "uncivil war," going on in the US.² Is there a speech writer on his team who's a Copeland fan and just had to use the album's title? I'd like to think so.

"Money Makes You Ugly"

*The ice is melting and my lawn's on fire,
World's got a fever gettin' higher and higher,
Rapin' Mother Nature, frackin' up the earth,
Sellin' off the land for all that it's worth,
Just a little blue rock flyin' through space,
Who ever told you that you own this place?*

"Money" opens with a hard-edged rock vibe. It has an in-your-face tone of moral outrage that Copeland communicates very effectively. I found this cut to be a jaw-tightening, fist-clenching song of force and outrage. Its point smacks the listener hard and fast.

"Dirty Saint"

*Dirty Saint, Dirty Saint,
Might be in heaven but probably ain't,
Played so sweet make a woman faint,
There'll never be another like the dirty saint*

"Saint" is only halfway through the album but a good ending point for this review. After four songs that cover a wide swath of human failings and worries, "Saint" is a lovable homage to a recently passed blues and R&B man. It starts with a few solo drum notes that are a bit reminiscent of a march band but then leads to Copeland dropping all manner of clues and cues as to who the dirty saint is. The listener has about 3½ minutes to puzzle out the identity of the saint before the big reveal. Who could not fall in love with a song carrying this refrain? (Just couldn't leave out the following line though it comes later on in the song: "always knew how to kill the pain, there was more than holy water flowin' through his veins")

¹Howard Reich, *Chicago Tribune*, Jul 06, 2017

²U.S. President Joe Biden's Inaugural speech on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol, Washington DC, U.S., January 20, 2021: "...But the answer is not to turn inward, to retreat into competing factions, distrusting those who don't look like you do, or worship the way you do, or don't get their news from the same sources you do. We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal..."

A Casual Conversation with Marcel Smith

By Barbara Katen

Photos by Bob Cosman



I have wanted to interview one of our hometown favorites, Marcel Smith, since I started this bi-monthly column. Upon hearing confirmation that Marcel and the *Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra* will be performing at the upcoming Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony on Sunday, September 26th at Harlow's, I jumped at the opportunity. I love Marcel, you love Marcel, we all love Marcel! And on that note, away we go...

Blue Notes (BN): What was your inspiration and how did you get your start in music?

Marcel: I was inspired by my family. Mother always sang to me when I was a child. Father (a Detroit native) went to school with many of the young talented singers/musicians working out of the Hitsville studio. He ensured I knew this music. Also, Dad exposed me to gospel quartets like the *Mighty Clouds of Joy*, *Brooklyn All-Stars* and the *Violinaires*. Stepfather would sub as a disc jockey and would have reel-to-reel tapes of all this great soul music. Where Dad exposed me to Motown, my stepfather exposed me to everything else relative to soul music (including taking me to see *The*

Jackson Five when they played at Hughes Stadium in Sacramento). Grandparents would take me to church every Sunday where I could hear great music by the choirs, musicians and the rhythmic phrasing of the minister as he preached a sermon that would have the congregation spiritually transformed.

BN: Who are your biggest musical influences?

Marcel: Oh gosh, like many, I was influenced by major artists (I'll get to that later) but I'd like to mention some who may not know these names. Florence Davis (my grandmother) would sing to me but also taught me how to play the guitar and always encouraged my musical growth. James (Jim) Davis (my grandfather) born in Shreveport, LA, would sing these old hymns and work-songs he learned as a child. I would marvel at his voice as he would hum around the yard or even lead a prayer in church.

W.C. Lewis Sr. and his wife Elizabeth Lewis (affectionately known as Uncle Bill and Aunt Liz) - Uncle Bill had perfect pitch and a smooth baritone; when he sang, you could feel the sincerity and his conviction. Aunt Liz had a strong contralto voice which she could sing off mic and still be heard. Her piano playing was superb.

Then there is my local quartet influences, Willie Washington, Charles Ward, Bennie McClain, L.C. Williams, Louis Youngblood, O'Dell Ross Sr., Big Moose Walton, Jessie Calloway, Johnny Evans, Virgil Harris, Roy Tyler, and there are many others.

Sacramento Spiritual Five, *Sensational Harmonizers*, *Pearly Gates*, *Gospel Motivators*, *The Superior Angels*, *Oakland Silvertones*, *Westcoast Corinthians*. More well-known artists: *Mighty Clouds of Joy*, *Soul Stirrers*, Archie Brownlee, Clarence Fountain, Claude Jeter, Dorothy Love Coates, Shirley Caesar, Mahalia Jackson, *Blind Boys of Mississippi*, *Blind Boys of Alabama*, *Spirit of Memphis*, and *The Dixie Hummingbirds*.

Major Artists: Sam Cooke, Bobby Bland, Brook Benton, Smokey Robinson, Wilson Pickett, James Brown, Mary Wells, Joe Simon, Al Green, Ben E. King, Wes Montgomery, Bobby Womack, Johnnie Taylor, Ted Taylor, James Carr, *The Jackson Five*, *The Temptations*, Jackie Wilson, Marvin Gaye, Otis Redding, Clyde McPhatter, Arthur Prysock, Lou Rawls, Nancy Wilson, Nina Simone, and Nat King Cole.

BN: What do you think you would be doing if you weren't a musician?

Marcel: I would work in healthcare. Like music, it's an opportunity to heal and make people feel better.

BN: How did the fantastic musical partnership with you and Anthony Paule come about?

Marcel: Sadly, after the passing of Wee Willie Walker, Anthony and I met in San Francisco to discuss us lining up together. I always admired Willie and the *Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra* and had a chance to work with them prior to Willie's passing in November 2019. I would come to anywhere they were playing in Northern



Casual Conversation w. Marcel Smith, con't. from P. 10

California, listening, and figuring how do I build an organization like that. Never thought that I would have an opportunity to be a part of this great musical aggregation.

BN: What artists blow you away on stage and/or on record?

Marcel: Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, James Hunter Six, Soul Stirrers, Mighty Clouds of Joy, Blind Boys of Alabama, Isley Brothers, Bobby Rush, Little Milton, Rick Estrin & the Nightcats!!!

BN: Who is the person would you most like to meet and/or share a stage with (that you haven't already)?

Marcel: Mavis Staples or Robert Cray

BN: What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Marcel: Hmmm, good question. Well, I think I can be impatient with others, and I should seek to understand rather than jump to conclusions. I'm working on it.

BN: What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Marcel: Dishonesty. Period.

BN: What is your greatest fear?

Marcel: To die alone, without having my family, friends, loved ones around me, when I transition. After my father's passing in 2019, I hope he found comfort knowing that his family was at his bedside loving him until the end.

BN: What is your greatest extravagance?

Marcel: Wardrobe. I admit it... I love clothes - suits, shoes etc... but hate shopping.

BN: What words or phrases do you most overuse?

Marcel: "I know, right?"

BN: When and where were you happiest?

Marcel: I am happiest when I am with my family/friends, creating something in the kitchen/grill or doing music in the studio or live performance.

BN: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Marcel: I don't know if I would change a thing... as I believe good, bad, or indifferent, I'm me. But I may have made different choices along the way.

BN: What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Marcel: My (now adult) daughters.

BN: What is your most treasured possession?

Marcel: My Sam Cooke record collection

BN: Who are your heroes in real life?



Marcel: Dorothy (Davis) Magee – Mom, Milton L. Smith – Dad, James Davis – Grandfather, Florence Davis – Grandmother, Sam Cooke.

BN: What is your biggest regret?

Marcel: Not doing a solo project earlier in my music career.

BN: If you have a life motto, what is it?

Marcel: Be A Blessing To Someone Today.

NOW, JUST FOR FUN, PLEASE ANSWER THESE RAPID-FIRE TRIVIA QUESTIONS

Favorite Album of all time? - *The Legendary Sam Cooke*

Favorite quote? - "Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity." ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Favorite TV show? - *Keeping Up Appearances*

Favorite Movie? - *St. Louis Blues* with Nat King Cole

Favorite Food? – Soul Food, Sushi, Italian

Favorite drink? – Dirty Martini (shaken, not stirred) / Hennessy

Favorite guilty pleasure? - BBC Comedies. I love my Britcoms!

Favorite sport? – Basketball

Favorite leisure activity? – Wine Tasting

Favorite City? - Monterey

Biggest pet peeve? - Negative People/Negative Vibes

Cat or Dog? NOPE

One thing you can't live without? – I hate to admit it... My phone...

What poster, if any, did you have on your wall growing up? - Jimi Hendrix, Bob Marley and the "Let's Boogie" poster... all were Black Posters... Hey, it was the 70s. lol

If you could snap your fingers and change anything in the world, what would it be?

- End Poverty
- End Hate / Discrimination of any kind (Race, Age, Sexual/Gender Orientation)
- End Injustice
- End Climate Change
- End Wars
- End Domestic Terrorism
- Replace all the above with kindness, equity, equality and maybe we can have justice for ALL to preserve our future.

Be sure to join us at the SBS Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony on Sunday, September 26th at Harlow's to see Marcel Smith & *The Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra* perform!

For tickets to the HOF event, go to: <https://www.harlows.com/event/2021-sacramento-blues-society-hall-of-fame-awards/>

Preserving and Promoting the Blues

By Doug Pringle

Information Courtesy of Wikipedia

Texas Blues

Texas blues began to appear in the early 1900s among African Americans who worked in oilfields, ranches and lumber camps. In the 1920s, Blind Lemon Jefferson innovated the style by using jazz-like improvisation and single string accompaniment on a guitar. Jefferson's influence defined the field and inspired later performers. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, many bluesmen moved to cities, including Galveston, San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. It was from these urban centers that a new wave of popular performers appeared, including slide guitarist and gospel singer Blind Willie Johnson. Future bluesmen, such as Lightnin' Hopkins, Lil' Son Jackson, and T-Bone Walker were influenced by these developments.

T-Bone Walker relocated to Los Angeles to record his most influential work in the 1940s. His swing-influenced backing and lead guitar sound became an influential part of the electric blues. "It was T-Bone Walker", B.B. King once said, "who really started me to want to play the blues. I can still hear T-Bone in my mind today, from that first record I heard, 'Stormy Monday'. He was the first electric guitar player I heard on record. He made me so that I knew I just had to go out and get an electric guitar." Walker also influenced Goree Carter, whose "Rock Awhile" (1949) featured an over-driven electric guitar style and has been cited as a strong contender for the "first rock and roll record" title.

The state's R&B recording industry was based in Houston with labels such as Duke/Peacock, which in the 1950s provided a base for artists who would later pursue the electric Texas blues sound, including Johnny Copeland and Albert Collins. Freddie King, a major influence on electric blues, was born in Texas, but moved to Chicago as a teenager. His instrumental number "Hide Away" (1961), was emulated by British blues artists including Eric Clapton.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Texas electric blues scene began to flourish, influenced by country music and blues rock, particularly in the clubs of Austin. The diverse style often featured instruments such as keyboards and horns with emphasis on guitar soloing. The most prominent artists to emerge in this era were the brothers Johnny and Edgar Winter, who combined traditional and southern styles. In the 1970s, Jimmie Vaughan formed *The Fabulous Thunderbirds* and in the 1980s his brother Stevie Ray Vaughan broke through to mainstream success with his virtuoso guitar playing, as did ZZ Top with their brand of Southern rock.

Texas blues is one of the forms of the art which we preserve and promote.

CD Review

100 Years of Blues - Elvin Bishop & Charlie Musselwhite

(Alligator Records)

By Gregg Jamnetski

Musselwhite and Bishop have complex origins. Both were either born in the South (Musselwhite) or moved there in formative years (Bishop) and made their way to Chicago where they came to the attention of the great blues players of the latter part of the 20th century. Musselwhite is 77 and Bishop 78, so when they say they're giving us 100 years of the Blues, they mean it. Both have been at



the Blues idiom for at least 50 years.

These artists have been the beneficiaries of enormous generosity on the part of the greats who mentored them. Bishop was mentored by Little Smokey Smothers and Musselwhite by Big Walter Horton and Big Joe Williams. Musselwhite believed that he and Bishop were accepted by such legendary musicians because they were "from down home."

"Birds of a Feather"

This album's first song starts with Elvin Bishop counting time and coming forward with a quick time midrange guitar intro backed up by Charlie Musselwhite's harmonica. It conveys a fun time vibe; the point is unmistakable,

"Hey, here we are, birds of a feather, whole bunch of blues lovers gathered together..."

So clap, stomp, holler and yell, we're all friends here, so what the hell?

Me and Bob (Bob Welch - guitar lead along with Bishop) are playing just as good as we can,

And here come Charlie, he's a daaaaangerous man!"

With that, Musselwhite kicks in with a high octave harmonica intro and follows through with some fine, fine playing. I played this album while driving, maybe not the best idea. The party tone of this first cut didn't mix well with traffic, red lights, stop signs, irritable drivers, and the like.

"West Helena Blues"

This number takes the album in a quite different direction. Written by bluesman and West Helena, Arkansas native Roosevelt Sykes in the early 1950s, its lyrics tell the listener all they need to know:

"I got a woman that I'm loving, Lives in West Helena, Arkansas..."

"Yeah, they tell me West Helena,

It ain't nothing but a murderer's home,

I don't care if it's a graveyard, That's where I'll be before long."

According to the latest census data the per capita income of a West Helena, AR native is \$19,866, making it one of the poorest cities in the nation. West Helena has been losing jobs and population steadily. Sykes' lyrics were not only a harbinger of the future of his town, but he was also living that future when he wrote this song.

"What the Hell?"

"Look at the shape, the shape the nation's in; The situation is a shame and a sin

I want to know, how could a good thing go so wrong?; Yeah, tell me, what the hell is going on?"

If ever there were a set of lyrics that tell a listener exactly where the writer is at, where his/her orientation towards current events lie, "What the Hell?" would be that song. Elvin Bishop, who wrote and sings it, holds nothing back on this one. He is clearly appalled and worried about political life in the United States these days and shares those views in a worried vein. This song starts with a shrill guitar and harmonica tone. It's genius how such emotion can be so well conveyed in music and lyrics.

"Good Times"

"Used to party all over town; In on every scene

"We used to eat big old steaks; But now it's just fatback and pinto beans"

"Won't somebody tell me; Tell me where did all the good times go?"

"Used to take you out to dinner; The finest place in town,

Tell me, baby, what are we doing in this old welfare line?"

Charlie Musselwhite's "Good Times" is a perfect match for Bishop's "What the Hell?". Musselwhite's precise lyrics tell a simple tale of life for many at or near the poverty line. Times were once good, jobs were plentiful and paid well enough, but those times changed and with it came a decline in quality of life - few words, powerful thoughts. Elvin Bishop's plaintive guitar starts off the song and then backs up Musselwhite's vocals. Bob Welch's piano accentuates the long-worried notes Bishop plays. Both provide support and an emphasis on Musselwhite's vocals. For this piece he tells his story with vocals only, no harmonica. The song runs just under four minutes and doesn't need to be longer. The point is made; the listener left with a lot to think about.

"Old School"

This song is something of a break between the socially aware topics before it and the traditional blues songs after it. Sung by Bishop who is professing to be a technophobe ("Don't send me an email! Send me a female!") it is a quick-paced tune and a dated kind of techno-protest song that comes off as a little insincere. Where would Bishop/Musselwhite be without their websites, CD sales, computer managed bank accounts, TVs, cell phones, assistants arranging all manner of things for them electronically (elvinbishopmusic.com; charliemusselwhite.com)? The remaining songs after "Old School", seven in all, are all in the classic tradition embodying all the themes, tones and rhythms characteristic of the blues. There are no disappointments here.

"If I Should Have Bad Luck" is a road song in the popular tradition of the lonely traveling artist going from town to town watching others snugly engaged in their lives, while he longs for home and his awaiting love. Musselwhite sings in an upbeat reassuring vein: he'll be home soon; nothing to worry about. Bishop leads off with a flat, high pitched tone which Musselwhite contrasts with a mid-range melodic harmonica follow-through then begins singing. It's a Bishop/Musselwhite collaboration all the way and it doesn't disappoint.

"Midnight Hour Blues" is another Bishop/Musselwhite collaboration this time on a Leroy Carr (who died of alcohol addiction at only 30 years old) hit. The sad moody tone of this song and the respectful handling by the two musicians gives eloquence and power to an artist-lyricist whose own anguish resulted in a too, too early death. It's a telling sign of the power of an Elvin-Charlie collaboration that this song is not at all morbid but instead is thoroughly compelling.

"Blues Why Do You Worry Me?" Charlie starts this song off with a fast-paced harmonica riff that is quickly backed up by Bob Welch's swinging piano. The song is played in a quick tempo which adds an optimistic confident tone to bluesy lyrics. I played this one over and over and as crazy as it might seem to an ear tuned to blues, this song swings in the classic Duke Ellington style of the 30's and 40's. It's one of my favorites.

"South Side Slide" This is an instrumental featuring Elvin Bishop, Charlie Musselwhite and Kid Andersen playing bass for the two old masters. It's a joy! The piece rolls along sweeping any dormant feet into a toe tap or an urge to just get up and move to its vibe. This Elvin Bishop creation is as sophisticated and tonally complex as one can imagine. So much fun to listen to!

"Blues for Yesterday" Lyrically complex, this composition by Musselwhite is sung by him alone. The piece starts with a Bob Welch slow and low-pitched piano intro, soon to be joined by Elvin

Bishop's down tone guitar and Charlie's harmonica inflections. The piano stays front and center on this one and it works perfectly for the mood and tone of this song. What's Charlie telling us? I'll let excerpts from his song tell his story:

*"Well, I'm rolling down the highway; Rollin' into the settin' sun,
You know, I'm rolling down the highway; Rollin' into the settin' sun
I got the blues for yesterday; Times was tough, but we had fun"*

*"...You know, the moon is rising; Yonder down goes the sun"
"...Well, it's getting late over in the evening; Feels like my time is done"*

*"...It's been a long, long road; You know I have had one good run"
"...Rained all night until the break of dawn; Glad to see you, baby,
all my friends are gone"*

"...Well, I'm rolling down the highway..."

"Help Me" This song, first written and played in 1963, was tremendously popular upon its release. It was supposedly inspired by "Green Onions", a Booker T and the MGs hit of 1962. It is certainly reminiscent of that song's beat. "Help Me" is a mid-tempo song, despairing in tone that starts with a pounding piano laying down a simple repetitive beat. Musselwhite then kicks in with his harmonica with Bishop accentuating the rhythms of piano and harmonica. While the lyrics might sound like traditional blues themes of loss, pain, anguish, the music enriches the song with its thumping regular beat.

"100 Years of the Blues" I love this final song. It begins like the opening song "Birds of a Feather" with Elvin Bishop starting with a 1-2-3 count but with a much slower, very bluesy beat. It is a warm, welcoming song that just rolls along taking its time as Elvin and Charlie mention their Southern roots and those inspiring bluesmen they learned from in their early years in Chicago. It conveys a subtle sadness that this delightful album is coming to a close. Thankfully, the listener doesn't have to despair the album's ending. The restart button to hear the whole glorious ride all over again is just a press away!

BLIND LEMON
PEEL OCT 9

ROHARPO OCT 23
THE BLUESMAN

MICK MARTIN OCT 16

DENNIS JONES
OCT 30

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