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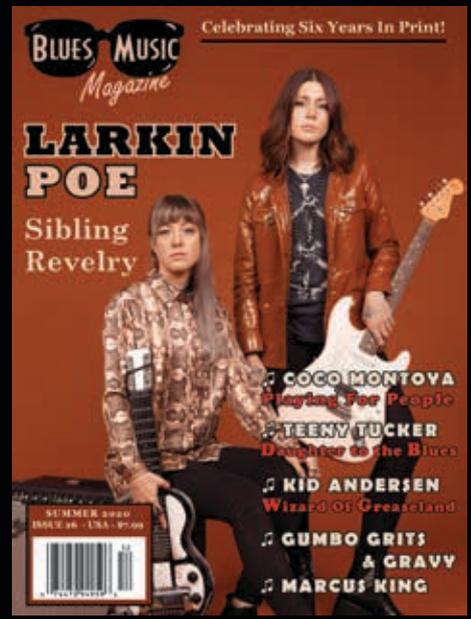
**KENNY WAYNE
SHEPHERD**

PLUS Seven New Album Reviews

BLUES MUSIC Magazine

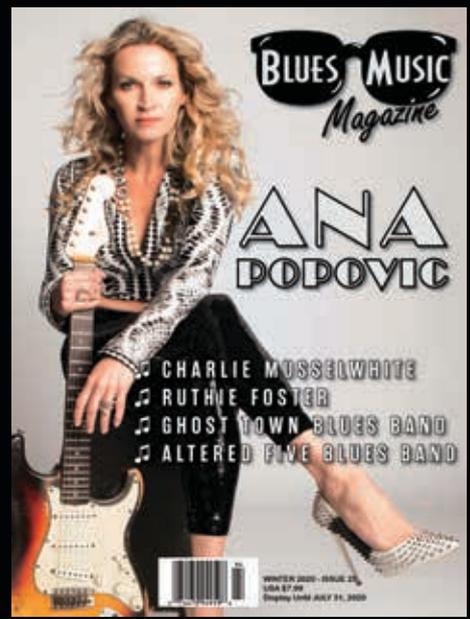
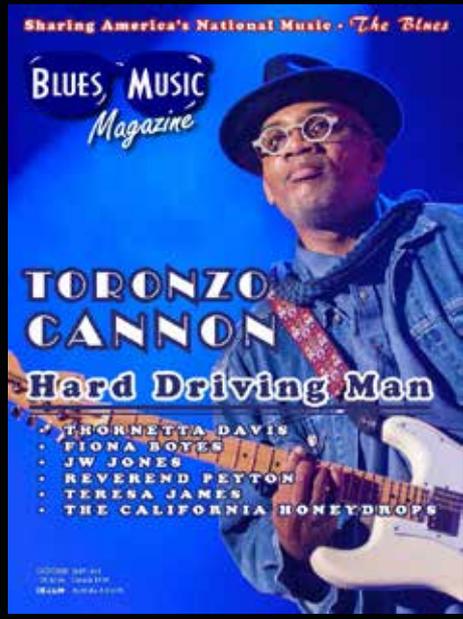
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- Rueben Williams, Thunderbird Management, Whiskey Bayou Records



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BLUES MUSIC ONLINE
November 22, 2020 - Issue 22
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KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Straight To You LIVE By Art Tiplaldi

PHOTOGRAPHY © JIM HARTZELL

Before the worldwide Covid pandemic, the Kenny Wayne Shepherd band was touring the world in support of his 2019 release, *The Traveler*. Part of that tour included stops in Germany in November 2019. As with all his live shows, one particular show, at the Leverkusener Jazztage Festival in Leverkusen, Germany, was filmed and broadcast by the legendary Rockpalast television show. The energy from the stage and the quality of the recording pushed Shepherd to release his first live CD/DVD since 2010's *Live! In Chicago*. In addition to his usual blues-rooted guitar format, here, Shepherd added a full horn section to the arrangements. In that way, each song becomes a new and different experience. As he planned its release, Kenny took time to talk about the project, his band, his artistic growth, and the pandemic.

Blues Music Magazine: What goes into the filming of a live CD and DVD like this one?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: There's a little more production than usual. There's a camera crew, an audio truck sitting out back. This was a live broadcast for the Rockpalast TV series in Germany so that was the initial reason for doing it. But then, after it was all said and done, we thought it was a really great show, the camera and the live audio was great. We remixed the audio ourselves. We thought that this would be a really

great performance and the timing now, since nobody can see us play live music and that's really the essence of what we do best, and we've never put out a live DVD we thought this might be the most opportune time to give our fans something like this right now.

Production-wise, you've got all these camera guys onstage and spread out in the audience, and throughout the building. The audio truck there, and we've got our own audio feed onstage because we're recording as well. It's a little more than usual, but ultimately,

It used to be, when I was younger, if shows were being recorded for audio or video, because it didn't happen so regularly that it would kinda get into your head a little bit. We've been recording all of our concerts every single night because we now have the technology. We've been doing that for years now. That helps to relieve the feeling of "the show's being recorded" because we're so used to it being recorded every night that we can forget about it and really just focus on the music. So that takes the whole elements of nerves away because the camera guys. That helps us get a better, more authentic performance than if we were tensed up knowing that it was being recorded. We can just get out there and do what we do without thinking about it.

Blues Music Magazine: What's the process like when you go back through all the edits of the film and audio as

the frontman who knows that this is something that's gonna represent you?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: For me, I'm kinda of a perfectionist, but also I don't want things to be too perfect, especially for the nature of what we do. On this particular project, I was really happy with a lot of the camera work these guys did. Especially the fact that there is a lot of emphasis put on the band. Instead of it being of me on the screen 95% of the time, there's a lot of interplay with the other guys in the band and they have plenty of moments. Instead of them just popping up every once and awhile, you can see, in each song, the contributions these players are making to those songs. I really like that approach because I think it's an atypical approach to a guitar centric band's live DVD. Those were the things that I was paying attention on this.

Blues Music Magazine: Speaking of the band, can you talk about what each member your band contributes. Let's start with the addition of horns to your sound.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: The goal is to create a real thick sound where you can hear all the instruments. Anytime you add a new instrument to a band, it changes the dynamics of the band. The horns have really brought a new awareness to the entire band. It's brought out new levels of dynamics

to us. There are new parts so that everybody has to pay closer attention. If there are any bad habits that have developed, those become apparent because what you've been doing, might not work with what they're doing. Everybody has to re-assess and re-evaluate what they are playing to make sure we're playing in harmony and complimenting each other rather than stepping on each other. I think the horns have brought a new life into the live performance for all of us.

Blues Music Magazine: Talk about Joe Krown and the keyboards and your rhythm section of Chris Layton and Scott Nelson.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: Joe's been with us at least three years. It's great to have another Louisiana guy in the band. Right as this is happening, we're switching bass players and going back to Kevin McCormick, who was the bass player with me in the Rides. But Scott's playing bass on this show. Because I played along with his records as a kid, Chris was my drummer before I had a drummer. When we started playing together, it fit like hand and glove. Chris and Scott have played together for many years. It was a great band with Scott in it, and it will be a great band with Kevin.

Blues Music Magazine: Tell us about Noah Hunt.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: We're like brothers. He's been in the band a long

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time. It's evolved over time. In the beginning, he was the primary lead vocalist. In the past 16 years, as I've been singing more and more, he's been playing some guitar. It's now evolved to where we are sharing the vocals and he's playing more guitar. Noah's got a great voice, and he's sung on so many important songs over the years. But as an artist and songwriter, I felt that I needed to sing more. What it's done is that it's given us another weapon to add to the arsenal. His voice and my voice are really different so that gives us a broader range of material that we can record and cover.

Watching him do his thing where he's in his natural element,

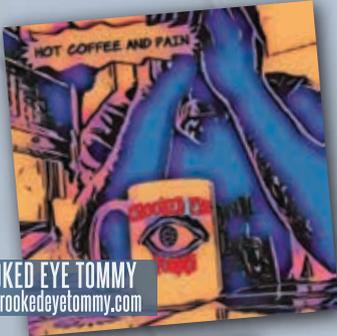
I can see that he really connects with the fans. He's got an incredible voice and it comes very naturally, like guitar playing comes naturally to me. For me, singing requires much more effort and probably for him, guitar playing requires more effort. We rub off on each other.

Blues Music Magazine: The early part of each set is about delivering songs from the most recent record and your live set always ends with "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)", but how do you craft the rest of your song selection? Is it concrete or spontaneous?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: This is the



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anchor setlist for that tour. I always reserve the right to change it and swap out songs. But this was the set that was created to support the *Traveler* record. If you came to any number of those shows we did on that tour, you probably saw this setlist.

Blues Music Magazine: On this record, you cover Neil Young's "Mr. Soul," Elmore James' "Talk To Me Baby," Slim Harpo's "I'm A King Bee," Joe Walsh's "Turn To Stone," and Jimi's "Voodoo Child (Slight Return). How do you choose songs to cover?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: The songs we cover have to speak to me, be an artist whom I respect, and inspire me. I have to feel like we can do those songs justice. My approach to covering songs is to do it our way, but we don't alienate the original intent of the song. I'm not trying to rewrite someone else's music. The original artists had a sound for that song in their mind and you can hear that in their recordings. Our job is to keep the spirit of that in our version of it.

Blues Music Magazine: How much of you is an entertainer and how much of you is an innovator?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: How much of me as a guitar player is an entertainer and how much is an innovator? That's the gray area for me. I consider myself an entertainer. As far as innovating the instrument, I don't

know. Hendrix and Eddie Van Halen were really innovators. I took what I learned from my influences and put it into a package that suits my music and the way I write. If I am innovative in anything, it's trying to take blues music and turn it into something that's a little more commercial. I grew up around radio and listening to hit songs and understanding what it takes to make a song right for radio. That's been my approach.

I grew up with choruses, melodies, and catchy lyrics swirling around in my head. So it was inevitable that when it came time for me to write my songs, as a blues man at heart and at my core, I wanted to write blues music that had a chorus and a melody that you'd want to sing along with. Eventually, songs that would make it to radio.

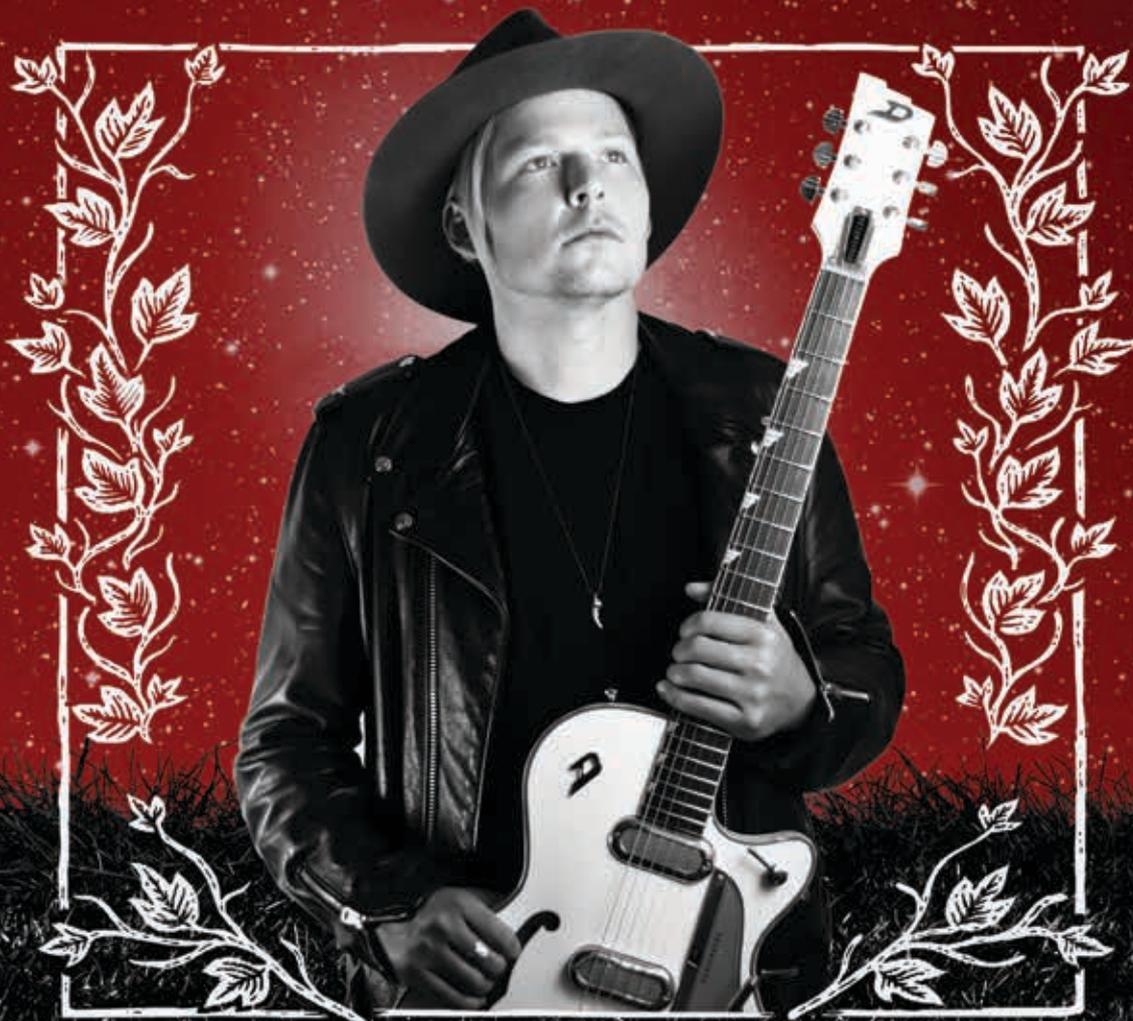
I grew up with the blues music that we all listened to and the messages that were in that music. I wanted explore new territory with my lyrics and push the boundaries of what is considered to be a blues song.

"Blue On Black" is a perfect example of that. It was named the Rock Song of the Year and also helped the album being named Blues Album of the Year at the Billboard Music Awards.

So if I'm innovative in anything, it's taking blues music to that format.

Blues Music Magazine: What could a young guitar player looking for a

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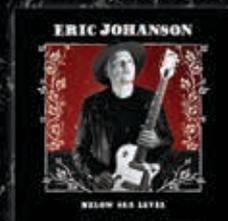
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career learn by watching this live DVD concert?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: For me, when I had the rare opportunity to get my hands on a VHS tape of a live performance of one of my favorite performers, I would watch what they were doing and I could see their hands. That would help me figure out licks I was struggling with by only listening to the records. Beyond that, this shows you how a certain band and artist put on a show. From that aspect of being an entertainer, it was my dad's radio show that helped me build my live show. Thirty seconds of dead air on radio seems like a lifetime. I like to pace my concerts like those radio shows with very minimal amount of dead space between songs. We like to keep the momentum going

and keep the crowd engaged in what we are doing. That's how I approach doing a show. So for people watching me and trying to figure out how they are going to cultivate their own show, this is an opportunity to see how I do it and see what about my show you may or may not want to incorporate into how you do things.

Blues Music Magazine: As you have watched this show over and over through the editing process, where were the places that you can see the band in the zone?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: The tunes where you hear extended solos by the musicians onstage are the ones I use to gauge where we were in the musical realm that night. I think that "Heat Of The Sun" and "Shame, Shame,

Shame” are two of those songs in the show that go somewhere different every night. It’s all about dynamics. Because there’s a lot of opportunity to improvise, those are two of the songs that I always look forward to looking back at here or on a YouTube video.

As a musician, you have the studio album versions of those songs in the palm of your hand. But when you would go to a concert or have a live recording, you would get to experience the way the song had evolved from how it was recorded. So this is a moment in time that represents the time in a great tour when we were hitting on all cylinders.

There are some songs where the fans don’t want to see how they evolve. If we were doing “Blue On Black” and really straying too far from the original, we might get some blow back. But the beauty of our genre is that blues music is known for jamming and improvising. So the fans give us a lot of leeway. I think they come to see that happen.

Blues Music Magazine: What are longtime KWS fans gonna love about this?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: It’s gonna give them the KWS live experience in the comfort of their own home. That will be the best we can do right now. It will keep them ready for when we are finally able to get back out on the road.

Blues Music Magazine: In addition to

keeping you off the road, what are some of the effects of the current pandemic to your world?

A week after we talked, Kenny told me his family was busy packing up to move to Tennessee. “Dealing with that and homeschooling the kids, I don’t practice every day. I’m devoting a lot my energy and focus on the family. I’ve made a few contributions to music and recorded a couple of solos for different artists’ albums. It’s not like it was. I have so many other things that I’m responsible for now.”

With the pandemic, Kenny told me that he’s been growing his hair long like it was when he first started playing. “It had been so long since I had a haircut. My wife was like, ‘I think you need a haircut.’ So I cut it all back off. I like have long hair, but it’s a lot of work for me.”

Blues Music Magazine: In addition to your hair dilemma, what else has the pandemic affected?

Kenny Wayne Shepherd: One of the coolest things that has happened through all this is the new Fender Signature Series guitars that came out. I wasn’t sure that this was the right time to release a new guitar, but Fender has announced that this is their biggest year ever. The demand for the guitar has been great that my guitar has been selling out, and they are scrambling to catch up and produce enough of them. **-BMO**

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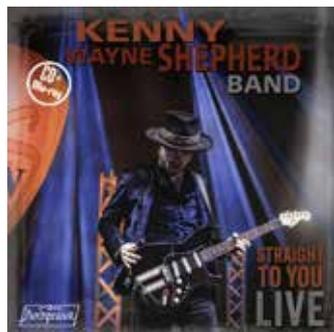
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ALBUM REVIEW

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD BAND

Straight To You Live CD/DVD

Provogue



There are other Kenny Wayne Shepherd concert recordings, specifically 2010's *Live! In Chicago*, but none with the guitar slinger's full touring band. That's changed now with this CD/DVD package of a (pre-pandemic) show from Leverkusen, Germany, on his tour supporting 2019's *The Traveler*.

Wayne and his six-piece unit, including two horn players, had been on the road for a while hitting the U.S., Brazil, and Europe, so were a tight, well-oiled machine for this stop in November 2019. Not surprisingly the focus is on new music, but mostly at the start of the 90-minute set where four *Traveler* tunes are rolled out. From there it's a trawl through older material including a fiery version of the slow blues "Shame, Shame, Shame" from his 1995 debut, 2011's "Heat Of The Sun," a set highlight extended to twice its five minute

original length, and of course 1997's "Blue On Black," Shepherd's biggest radio hit. It helps having longtime leather-lunged vocalist Noah Hunt along both to reprise the songs he initially sang on and provide a visual foil for Shepherd, who also sings.

The guitarist covers some rock and roots classics; the former with Neil Young's Buffalo Springfield vintage "Mr. Soul" (available on DVD and in some audio formats) and Joe Walsh's riff happy "Turn To Stone," and the latter in Elmore James' "Talk To Me Baby" and Slim Harpo's salacious "I'm A King Bee." All are given energetic, high-voltage workouts. Shepherd may have been influenced by the blues of Chess and Delta acts, but that's not what anyone expects at one of his concerts. And they get what they came for, a supercharged dose of slashing guitar solos, peppy horns, on-the-mark drums (from ex-Double Trouble man Chris "Whipper" Layton who never seems to break a sweat), and surging keyboards handled by veteran New Orleans musician Joe Krown.

It's a hard-hitting ensemble of established players who know how to dig into Shepherd's rugged, rock oriented blues without overdoing the sonic bombastics that sometimes threaten, but never actually take over. Even a roaring ten-minute set closing version of Hendrix's "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" balances Shepherd's fret shredding with a subtlety and maturity that comes from knowing when to hold back and when to open the stops. Perhaps an acoustic section would have been a worthwhile way to shift the dynamics of the night and display more range.

Regardless, the high definition video reproduces it all. Multiple cameras can perhaps be accused of being a little too caffeinated but nonetheless capture the outfit locking together with effortless drive. The visual resolution is so clear you can not only watch Shepherd's fingers fly over the fret board during the many solos he fires off, but nearly count the hairs in his beard on the facial close ups.

Even if you're not a fan of the more notes per minute style Shepherd excels at, but generally holds in check, it's impossible not to be impressed by the overall intensity exuded here, even in the quietest moments. It might have taken a while to arrive, but the first video of a typical Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band show is a keeper.

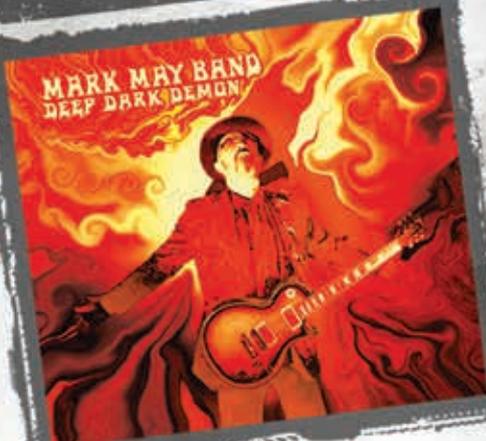
Since no one knows when events like this will start again, it's a welcome release that displays the guitarist and his band at the peak of their powers.

– Hal Horowitz

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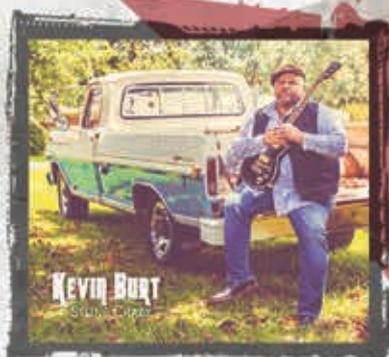


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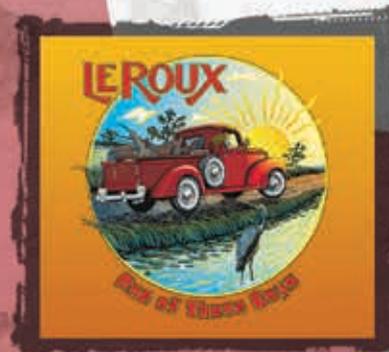
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ALBUM REVIEW

SHEMEKIA COPELAND

Uncivil War

Alligator



In a world where left wing hatred dukes it out with right wing hatred, Shemekia Copeland cuts through the “fake news” and offers straight talk and insight into today’s headlines without diminishing the argument of either side.

If for no other reason than it is one of the only focused cries for unity in the blues catalog at the moment, this song has been an instant success. That Copeland is a great singer who articulates her songs clearly is just sprinkles on the cake icing. She also is backed by great guest musicians here including Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush, Webb Wilder, and Duane Eddy. She also is wildly eclectic in bringing Americana and other music influences into her songs.

Hahn explains his goals for “Uncivil War.” “I wanted to address the challenge we have that almost exactly 50% of the country seems to have views that are diametrically opposed to each other and all these very serious bad words are tossed around whether it’s on the side of the fence of dictatorship or, if you’re on the other side of the fence, dirty words like socialism.”

“Walk Until I Ride” addresses another thorny issue, racism, a subject Copeland’s music has long targeted. African-Americans sometimes find it impossible to hail a cab in New York, so they have to walk until they ride. This song, featuring producer Will Kimbrough on guitar, Jerry Douglas on lapsteel, and backup singers, has that Staple Singers gospel/R&B hybrid sound. “Dirty Saint” is about the late Dr. John who produced, played on, and wrote songs for Copeland’s *Talking To Strangers* album. Hahn says Dr. John would have loved the title: “He used to have a phone message. You would call him up, and he would say (imitates his hipster voice), ‘You know who you got. Leave a message. I might get back to ya. I might not.’”

Copeland laughs heartily about her soulful cover of the Stones’ “Under My Thumb.” “I don’t like to think of a woman under a man’s thumb. The other way around seems perfectly right to me.”

As she does in every album, Copeland covers a song by her dad, Johnny Clyde Copeland. “Love Song” has a special place in her heart. “I remember when he wrote it. We used to have these barbecues. Dad playing his guitar, John (Hahn) playing harmonica, everybody eating and laughing, and that’s what that song is to me.”

John Hahn was at Johnny Copeland’s bedside the night before he died. He’s known Shemekia since she was eight and considers her his daughter. “John has been reincarnated,” she says. “There was an old black woman many years ago who had a whole lot to say, never said it, and she came back in John Hahn. That’s all that is. Sorry, but that’s the truth.”

This is a phenomenal album in every measure. *Uncivil War* looks for goodness but with eyes wide open in a polarized world. Finding this kind of informed insight in the current global crisis carries the emotional punch of discovering a cure for the coronavirus.

– Don Wilcock

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ALBUM REVIEW

ELVIN BISHOP AND CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

100 Years Of The Blues

Alligator



The last live performance my wife and I attended was Elvin Bishop and Charlie Musselwhite at the Keswick Theatre in the Philly suburb of Glenside several weeks before the COVID-19 crisis. Their relaxed, 75-minute performance consisted mainly of slow to mid-tempo blues with several tales about their careers mixed in with several plugs for *100 Years Of The Blues*; they were accompanied by Bob Welsh on guitar and piano as they are on this album.

Friends for more than six decades, this is the first time they've recorded as a pair. I've listened to their music, a combined 110 years, and have seen both on numerous occasions. Their musical prowess is undiminished and their performances here possess a lean muscularity that informs their soulfully intricate interplay. Nine of the 12 tracks were written by either Bishop and/or Musselwhite; most were previously recorded. Musselwhite sings on six tracks and Bishop on five. The lone instrumental "South Side Slide" pays homage to their South Side of Chicago roots. The new original that will get the most attention has Bishop sardonically asking the musical question "What The Hell?" about the current state of affairs. More of Bishop's wry wit is heard on "Old School" with lyrics like "Don't send me an email, send me a female."

Blues camaraderie is celebrated in the other new original "Birds Of A Feather" which opens the album and in the title track closer. Musselwhite's originals must have special meaning for him to record them again: "Blues For Yesterday," "Blues Why Do You Worry Me," "If I Should Have Bad Luck," and "Good Times" (a.k.a. "Where Have All The Good Times Gone"). I enjoyed all the tunes, and it matters little that many were previously recorded. They all sound fresh because of the music's intensity despite the absence of drums.

Covers are Sonny Boy Williamson's "Help Me," Roosevelt Sykes' (via James Cotton) "West Helena Blues" (both sung by Musselwhite), and Leroy Carr's "Midnight Hour Blues." Musselwhite first recorded "Help Me" on his 1966 Vanguard debut *Stand Back!* On this version Welsh's hard-pumping piano propels the tune with Bishop firing off jagged, fuzz-toned notes evocative of Harvey Mandel's playing on the 1966 version. The most surprising track is Bishop's rendition of "Midnight Hour Blues." Bishop is generally known for his good-natured country sage vocals, but his dark, deliberate vocals here are imbued with a somber apprehension underscored by Musselwhite's eerie chromatic. There's a palpable ache in Bishop's voice with a sense of dread that reminded me of a line from *Hamlet*, "Prologue to the omen coming on." Special kudos to Bob Welsh for his stellar playing that had me thinking of Otis Spann and Sunnyland Slim. A most enjoyable set by two beloved veteran virtuosos of the blues and certain to be found on numerous Top Ten lists for 2020.

– Thomas J. Cullen III

JOHN NÉMETH

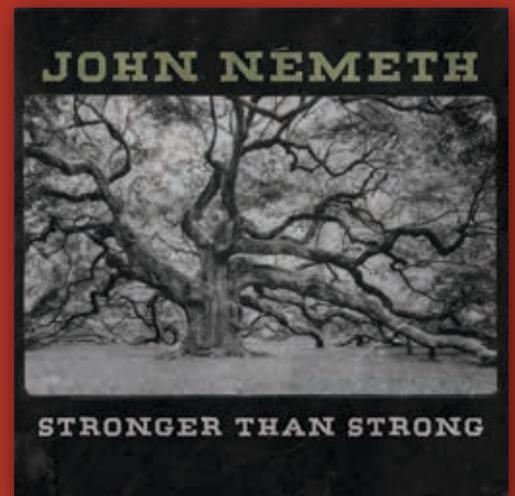
"Somewhere between soul, blues, and the early years of rock, John straddles the divide with a wonderful sense of style!" -*New England Blues Review*

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Award winning singer, songwriter and harmonica player John Németh releases his 10th album, recorded with his seasoned road band of young gun players, The Blue Dreamers

"Stronger Than Strong" will be released in multiple formats including digital, CD, and vinyl!



"I wish you all the greatest of health during these difficult times. I hope this new album brings you excitement and joy! I had a ball writing and recording it and feel so grateful to have the opportunity to share new music with you. Please be careful and be well ... I look forward to the day when I can see you all at a live show! Thank you for your support." - John Németh



www.johnnemeth.com

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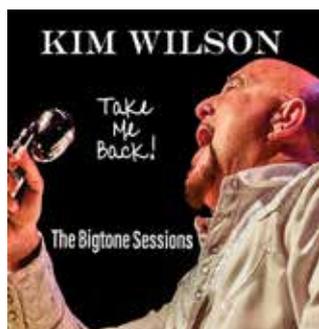
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ALBUM REVIEW

KIM WILSON

Take Me Back

MC Records



Few things are as musically soothing to me than an hour of deeply rooted Chicago blues. Wilson's *Take Me Back* is this summer's comfort food for the soul. This album is the follow-up to his 2017 critically acclaimed *Blues And Boogie Vol. 1*. Using a roster of mostly the same musicians, Wilson continues his deep affection for the tenets of the traditional blues he so loves. To honor that respect, the record is dedicated to his honorary uncle, Jimmy Rogers.

Wilson and Rogers have a long and loving history together. Wilson was, as a young 23-year-old, afforded the opportunity to share a stage with blues legends in Antone's club in Austin in the late 1970s as part of the Fabulous Thunderbirds house band. From those experiences, Wilson was called on to back Rogers during many of his shows, produced and backed Rogers' on his 1990 *Ludella* record for Antone's Records, and years later be part of the Jimmy Rogers All Stars on the 1999 Rogers tribute album.

Take Me Back features four Rogers tunes and singletons by Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Percy Mayfield, Larry Williams, and Jimmy Nolen. Add that to seven Wilson originals and *Take Me Back* is a 16-song buffet of time-honored, conventional blues. So conventional is the recording that the longest song here touches four minutes, with nine clocking under three minutes. Old school indeed.

Instead of cherry picking from Rogers most well-known songs, Wilson selected four under-the-radar tunes Rogers recorded for Chess – "Goin Away Baby" (1950), "Money, Marbels, And Chalk" (1951), "The Last Time" (1952), and "If It Ain't Me" (1956). Wilson delivers these Rogers songs in the exact manner of the Golden Age of Chicago Blues. For his part, Wilson sings verses that are answered by piano, guitar jabs, and fierce blows on his muddy and distorted harmonica, reflective of the traditional way Wilson heard Rogers play these during their nights in Antone's.

The seven Wilson originals are all composed in that same Chicago blues vein. Four are high-wired, harp-led instrumentals that can easily surface when Wilson and his Thunderbirds deliver a more blues-influenced set.

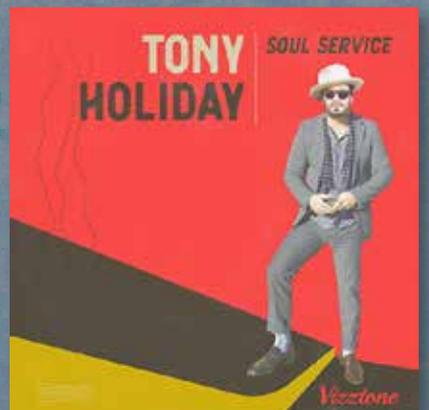
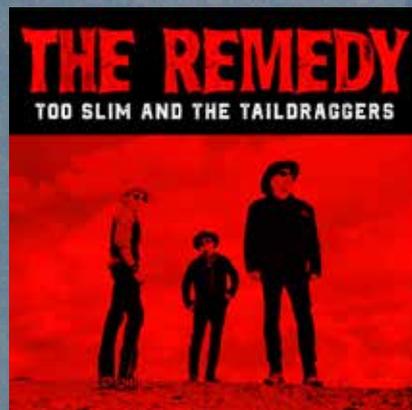
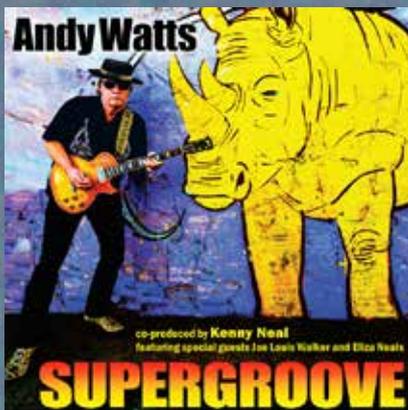
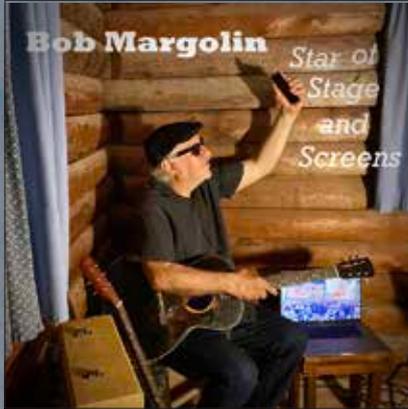
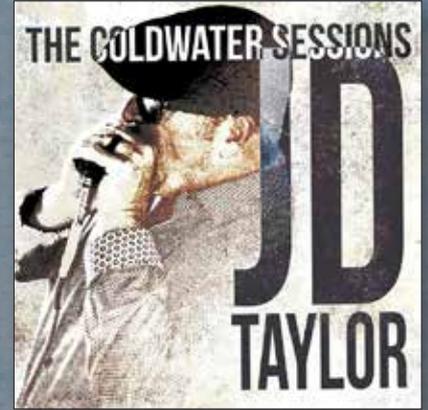
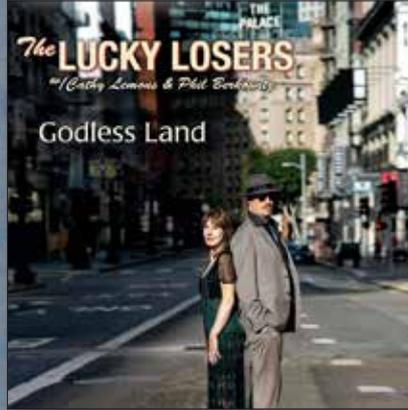
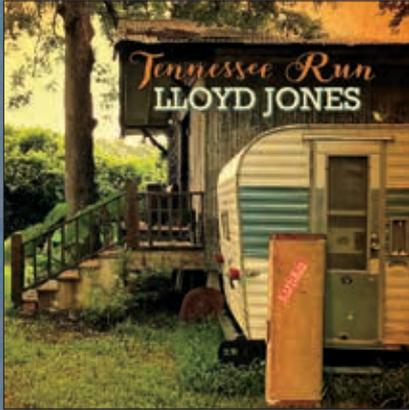
This is Wilson's return to MC Records after a 17-year hiatus. On that label was his 2001 outstanding *Smokin' Joint*. Of that release, I wrote, "Whether he deals electric harmonica through his bullet mic a la Little Walter or draws bent notes acoustically, Sonny Boy-styled, Wilson offers the harmonica curriculum essential to every aspiring harp player. A recording like this is essential to keeping that straightforward blues alive." His return to MC Records offers exactly the same vision.

– Art Tipaldi

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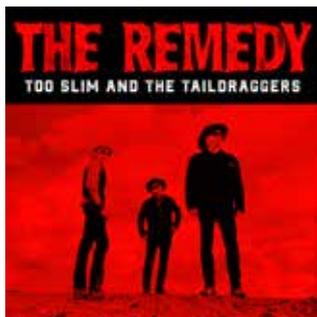
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ALBUM REVIEW

TOO SLIM AND THE TAILDRAGGERS

The Remedy

VizzTone



Tim Langford may be “too slim,” but this album isn’t; it’s chock-full of kick-ass blues rock. Over three decades of performing, Langford has fronted bands with keyboards, horns, and harmonica. Here, as in the praised 2018 album *High Desert Heat*, he appears at the head of the pared-down Taildraggers, with Zach Kasik on bass, occasional banjo, and guitar, and Jeff “Shakey” Fowlkes on percussion. Along with the current configurations led by Tab Benoit, this outfit merits a place in the top pantheon of blues power trios.

The nearly full hour of blues is comprised of 11 songs, ten being originals. Langford handles the vocals ably, with potent, raspy aplomb. He also deals out scorching guitar licks in measured doses, generally eschewing long, meandering solos. In a trio, with essentially one lead instrument, the guitar (and the voice is another, of course), it’s not always easy to avoid repetition and formulaic attacks, but this album succeeds admirably in doing so. Kasik, who wrote or co-wrote five of the songs, provides steady bassline, and Fowlkes is dynamic and frequently spectacular on the drums.

The set blasts off with “Last Last Chance,” the fed-up singer saying goodbye to his lover in no uncertain terms. “She Got The Remedy” reverses the theme as the singer lauds his lover for providing healing; musically if not thematically, the song is reminiscent of Tab Benoit’s “Medicine.” “Devil’s Hostage” slows the tempo for a lament about unwise choices, and the subject is repeated on “Reckless,” which features the added talent of Sheldon Ziro on harmonica. Ziro sticks around for the next track, “Keep The Party Rollin’,” which is a five-minute rockin’ boogie a la John Lee Hooker and ZZ Top. Fowlkes propels this one into overdrive; don’t expect to sit down while it’s playing.

The ensuing track, “Sunnyland Train,” is a six-minute-plus cover of an Elmore James song, and Too Slim demonstrates definitively that he has mastered slide guitar. “Sure Shot” is a haunting, minor key track that looses Kasik on banjo, and then “Platinum Junkie,” describing the sad intersection of addiction and fame, affords plenty of space for guest harmonicist Jason Ricci to reveal his ample chops. “Snake Eyes” presents Kasik again on banjo meshing beautifully with Fowlkes’s drums as Langford sings movingly; on this track he sounds like Tom Petty as he does on the penultimate track, “Think About That,” in which the third guest harmonica player, “Rosy” Rosenblatt, waxes exuberantly while Slim rips off some piercing high notes. The set closes with “Half A World Away,” a love ballad with Too Slim playing his most lyrical guitar leads of the set. *High Desert Heat* was nominated for a 2019 Blues Music Award. This album is worthy of nomination for the next BMAs.

– Dan Stevens



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Jim Dickinson • Luther Dickinson • Cody Dickinson

For more than 12 years this recording was mentioned obscurely in interviews as a super-group, old-school jam session by those few witnesses who knew this was a once-in-a-lifetime moment.

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 4

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ALBUM REVIEW

NEW MOON JELLY ROLL FREEDOM ROCKERS

New Moon Jelly Roll Freedom Rockers, Vol. 1

Stony Plain



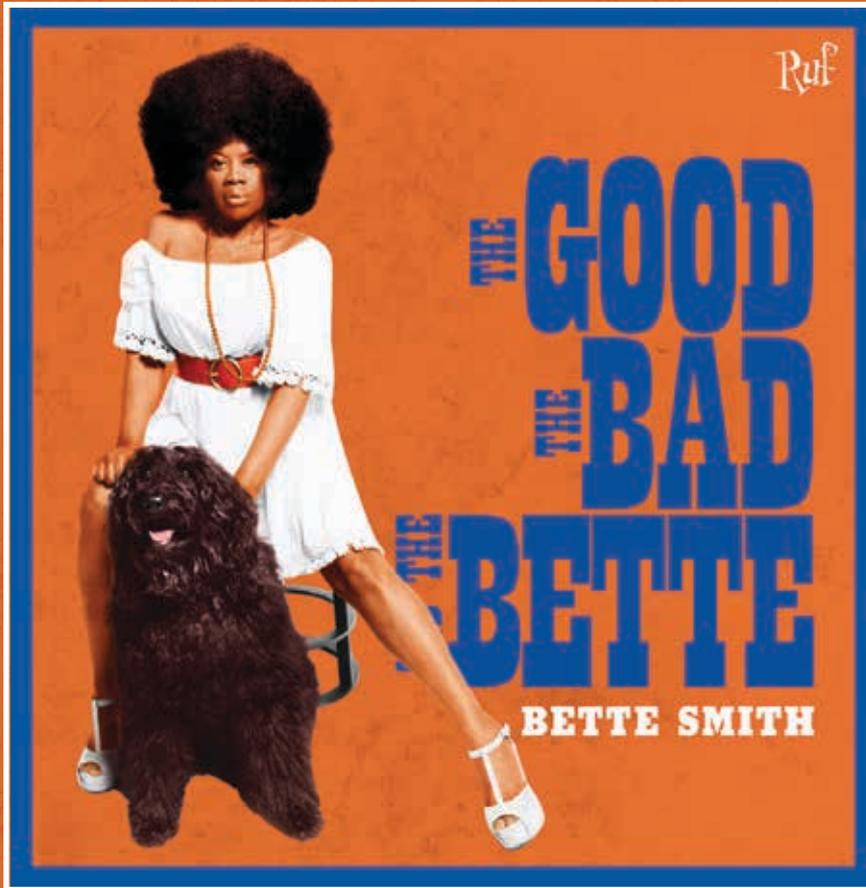
The eight artists on this album are cross-generational. They represent two races, and resumes that legitimize each one's right to be called a legacy act. Two of them, Charlie Musselwhite and Jimbo Mathis, contribute original songs. Others are featured in numbers that range from Alvin Youngblood Hart's take on music spanning almost a century in origin from his reconstruction of the Hendrix rocker "Stone Free" to revamping Charlie Patton's "Pony Blues" and The Mississippi Sheiks' "Stop And Listen Blues."

Luther and Cody Dickinson of the North Mississippi Allstars perform with their late dad Jim Dickinson on Wilbert Harrison's "Let's Work Together" and "Come On Down To My House." As varied as these artists are, they all reach deep within to activate their muse. And each has a deep love, understanding, and the expertise to deliver unique takes on these songs. Musselwhite opens the CD with an original "Blues, Why Worry Me," is featured on another original, "Strange Land" he wrote when he was 18 trying to feel his way around Chicago, and a cover of the Memphis Jug Band's "K.C. Moan."

Nowhere does it say this, but I'd be willing to bet most of these recordings were captured in one take. Recorded in 2007 at the late Jim Dickinson's Zebra Ranch Studio in Independence, Mississippi, the ten numbers feature the musicians gathered in a circle vamping off each other while the tape ran. Spontaneity and pure love of the process dominate. Cody Dickinson is quoted on the cover: "I hope the love in the room can be heard in the music. This record was truly a joy to make."

Spontaneity has always been an important measure of great blues but an elusive one as recording techniques make perfection the imperfect descendent of music born at early 20th century Saturday night fish fries. These guys make it sound easy again. The name of the group is a collective effort that proves these guys are better at playing than labeling. Volume 2 is due for release in the spring of 2021.

– Don Wilcock



"Bette is the swaggering proof that there is nothing dated about soulful rock and roll sung with attitude, defiance, and a take-no-prisoners aesthetic."

- American Songwriter

"Bette is capable of breaking off a high note with a throaty cry or scraping so low and wide that she threatens to put her bass player out of work."

- Billboard

**BETTE SMITH
THE GOOD THE BAD
AND THE BETTE**

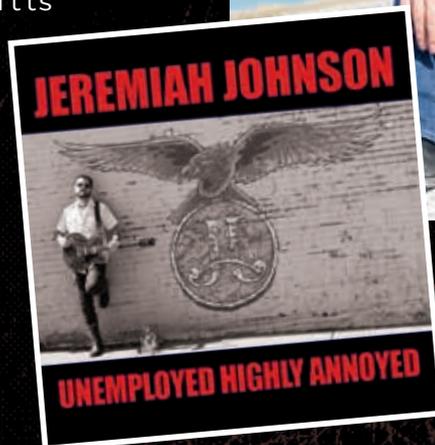
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"I think we caught lightning in a bottle with this snapshot of these difficult times and it is possibly my best record of my career, born from the most challenging time in my life as a musician."

- Jeremiah Johnson

"The record puts Johnson's love for old-school songcraft at the center of the action and contains a seemingly endless series of memorable tracks, which are enhanced by his considerable vocal and instrumental skills"

- Rock and Blues Muse



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ALBUM REVIEW

BETTE SMITH

The Good The Bad And The Bette

Ruf Records



Moses gets to the top of the mountain, The voice says “In 40 feet, your destination is on your right.” Moses huffs ‘n’ puffs up to the Burning Bush. “I’m Moses; I’m here to see God.” After a pause so pregnant it water breaks, the Bush responds through the steam: “God’s at lunch. But he left 87 commandments. Sign here.” Moses freaks: “Are you nuts? I’m 260. I can’t carry 87 commandments down a mountain. I got two tablets, I can take 10.”

Like Moses, I cannot fit, in my allotted space, what must be said about Bette Smith’s *The Good The Bad And The Bette*. Every song has something remarkable. From the blistering opening “Fistful

Of Dollars,” the energy coming off these tracks could crack walnuts through the titanium walls of Dick Cheney’s bunker.

In “Whistle Stop,” Smith does what Robert Johnson, Big Maybelle, and Howlin’ Wolf never did: she sings the word “bereft;” before this album is done, she deals out enough five dollar words to score three rounds of Blatz at the Tippy Toes Tap happy hour. All workin’. All rockin’. “I’m A Sinner” fulfills the ‘60’s promise of the cover’s Hullabaloo hair with the ultimate secret agent TV series theme that never was. It’s also Satan’s first try at call and response, and if you’re not up and frugging by the two minute mark, you’re a slug in a coma.

My chest pains started with “I Felt It Too,” a spleen shredder approximating what happens when the Shangri-Las get swallowed by a monster truck thundering downhill out of control piloted by Big John Mazmanian at the ‘68 Winternationals. “Human” is just a great song. And Bette, I wanna be *your* human too. Even the cover, with the dog from Tatoonie in the Carol Channing ostrich feather boa knocked me out.

Matt Patton and Bronson Tew produced a relentless multifaceted marvel driven by – because they must be mentioned – Luther Dickinson, Jimbo Mathus, Craig Pratt, Jody Nelson, Curtis J. Brewer, John McLeod, Eric Carlton, Henry Westmoreland, Jamison Hollister, Patterson Hood, and Schaefer Liana.

The Good The Bad And The Bette is a glistening gazillion karat diamond in the rough. And the rougher it gets, the better Bette Smith sounds. I could keep piling on the praise, but I’m too old to carry it all down the mountain.

– Terry Abrahamson

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Thanks to all the artist who contributed their music to this CD Sampler.
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- 1) **The Jimmys** - "Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet" from the album *Gotta Have It* on Brown Cow Productions
- 2) **Tony Holiday** - "Payin' Rent On A Broken Heart" from the album *Soul Service* on VizzTone Label Group
- 3) **John Primer & Bob Corritore** - "Little Bitty Woman" from the album *The Gypsy Woman Told Me* on VizzTone Label Group
- 4) **Too Slim & The Taildraggers** - "Devil's Hostage" from the album *The Remedy* on VizzTone Label Group
- 5) **Greg Martinez** - "Eva Delle" on the album *MacDaddy Mojeaux* on Nola Blue Records
- 6) **The Nighthawks** - "I Hate A Nickel" from the album *Tryin' To Get To You* on EllerSoul Records
- 7) **Michael Kaeshammer** - "Who Are You" from the album *Live In Concert* on Linus Entertainment
- 8) **Tyler Morris** - "Nine To Five" from the album *Living In The Shadows* on VizzTone Label Group
- 9) **Kenny 'Blues Boss' Wayne** - "Go, Just Do It" from the album *Go, Just Do It* on Stony Plain Records
- 10) **The Eric Hughes Band** - "Follow Your Stupid Little Dreams" from the album *Postcard From Beale Street* on Endless Blues Records
- 11) **Tas Cru** - "That Lovin' Thing" from the album *Drive On* on Subcat Records
- 12) **Mick Kolassa** - "She Kept Her Head Up" from album *If You Can't Be Good (Be Good At It)* on Endless Blues Records
- 13) **Charlie Bedford** - "Money Junkie" from the album *Good To Go* on Blue Heart Records
- 14) **The Wildcat O'Halloran Band** - "Crunch Time" from the album *Deck Of Cards* on Self-released

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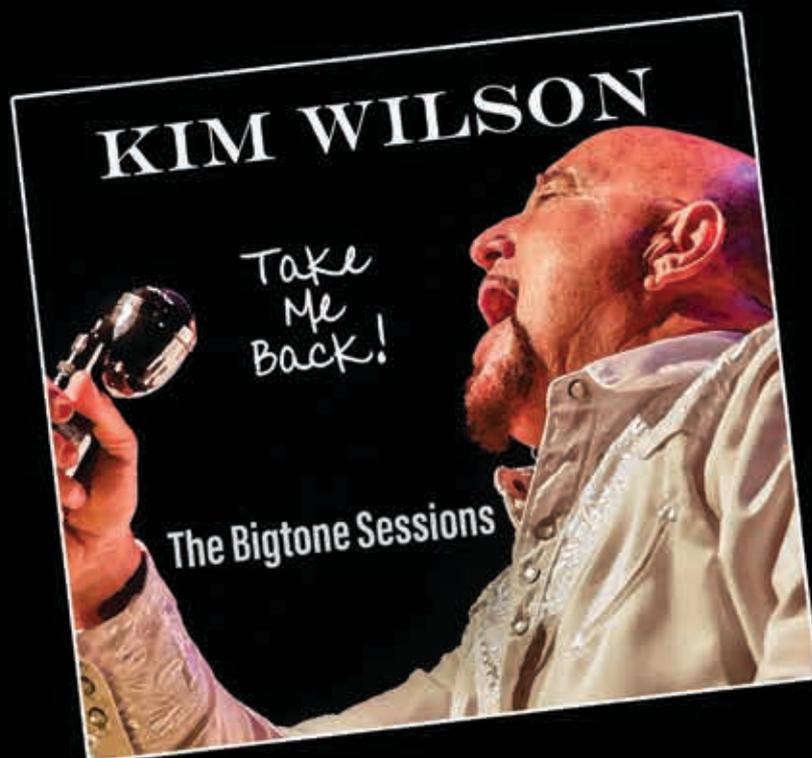
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To say that these recording sessions were enjoyable experiences would be a vast understatement! Not only are these fellas' great musicians but they are also dear friends of mine and I want to thank them for the incredible performances that they gave.

– Kim Wilson



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