



BSWPA BLUESLETTER

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1

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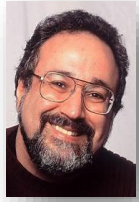


Spring 2022



A Salute to Alligator Records; Its longevity and music

Alligator began 50 years ago - **Bruce Iglauer** wanted his boss, the late Bob Koester from Delmark Records, to release music from Hound Dog Taylor and the Houserockers. Bob Koester declined. Bruce Iglauer decided to strike out on his own, and Alligator Records was born.



Bruce Iglauer

In a recent interview Scott Simon asked Bruce Iglauer what had piqued his interest to make such a change in his life after hearing Hound Dog Taylor. Bruce's response: It was the happiest music I had ever heard. Hound Dog didn't do slow, cry-in-your-beer blues. He did blues to make you drink your beer and get up and dance. It was so raw, and it was so spontaneous. It was just three guys, two electric guitars and a drum set... playing cheap equipment in a club that didn't even have a stage. And the

music just made me want to dance ... and jump up and down. And it needed to be shared. It felt so great!

In that interview, Bruce Iglauer's expressed his take on the Blues.... 'Well, the blues was designed not to make you feel bad. When I first came to Chicago in 1970, a patron at one of the blues clubs said to me, you listen to the blues to get rid of the blues. Blues was created by horribly oppressed people down South - Black people down South. But the magic is that the music speaks to people all over the world. And it makes them feel better. It squeezes the pain out of you. It's a healing music. It's a music that's been easy for me to dedicate my whole career to. And it's a music that just keeps feeding me emotionally'.

Fast forward to the most recent Blues cruise. The Blues gang had gathered early in the day to listen to several Alligator recording artists talk about their tenure with Bruce Iglauer and 'his' Alligator Records.



Toronzo Cannon

First to talk was **Toronzo Cannon**. Toronzo Cannon is known to weave stories into the body of his songs. Many of those stories came from what he had heard while driving buses in Chicago. Toronzo said he would break up the guitar on a song to tell his story. Bruce Iglaur, the commander and chief at Alligator, would patiently say.... 'more guitar Toronzo'. Toronzo was supported by Alligator by their encouraging his desire to be known as a Chicago Blues artist and to

push his heritage in his music. Alligator sagely advised Toronzo to make his music more radio friendly. It was suggested that he shorten his songs for more radio play. A wise Toronzo heeded but says that the audience gets the full version when he is playing live in the clubs. Toronzo added that he fine tunes his songs at night in the clubs and then takes them to the studio to record. When asked about his joining Alligator Records, Toronzo stated that Bruce Iglar did not want to touch me (my music) for many years because I

had a day job. I was good at self-promoting during those years while on my own and had lots of work. Finally, Bruce took me on. He helped me to make my songs even better and committed to our working together. With Alligator's guidance I was inspired to give my all, to work my tail off and be true to myself and what I have to say through my music.



Chris Vachon

Chris Vachon from Roomful of Blues said that he has learned to improve his chops on internet mixing. He added that he prefers to produce his band. Chris's words: 'I had many rough edges at the beginning. Bruce gave me input. He actually drove around in the car and listened to my music. (Bruce did that for the Blues Society of Western PA's Blues from the Burg 1 compilation...his advice was spot on!). It was suggested that I needed a publisher and a media

team which were made available at Alligator for all the artists that were onboard'. Chris added: 'Bruce actually lets me do what I want. I have thirty-five published songs. What Bruce did tell me was Don't write a song about trains. .no one takes the train. The lesson...to be relevant to the audience. Bruce also advised not to use slang where the audience did not understand, making my material sound dated, not contemporary. He also said that there were many flavors of Blues Rock. Do what we do, do not be too outrageous and people will want to hear you play'. Chris said that Bruce Iglauer is known for supporting touring artists, educating the public and moving the music forward, figuring out how to maneuver the curves. Roomful is a classy, swinging horn driven band...Bruce promotes us as such and does not compromise our product.



Coco Montoya

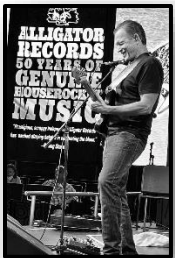
Coco Montoya soon took center stage to talk about being tutored by Albert Collins in his early years. Coco stated that he wanted to be around Albert Collins all the time. It did not matter what the gig paid, it was about wanting to learn and soak up all things Albert Collins. Coco added that Albert had no children but had tons of children, musicians and fans following his lead. Coco stated that he became a die-hard Albert Collins fan like many others. Albert soon knew his name. I picked up on Collins's groove, licks and soon had his

feel for music. Collins was super loud, used body language to his advantage with the crowd and loved to vamp. That did not translate onto his records. The live Albert Collins show was what it was all about. Bruce Iglauer, who at one time did not mesh well with Coco Montoya, came to a show. After that show, Bruce Iglauer said that he did not normally thank people for making him cry at a show (the music was that good!) and asked to sign Coco, wondering why he had not signed Coco to Alligator ten years earlier. Bruce and Coco, as the story goes, were oil and water for many years because Coco had a temper and was a purist with his music. Montoya added that Bruce Iglauer is a creator and will irritate you and drive you crazy to get the best out of you. Coco stated that while collaborating, he and Bruce butt heads, sit back, collaborate, and fight to the end of the earth to get to the final product. Sometimes after all the wrangling and hassling, Bruce would turn and say ...you were right.



Tinsley Ellis

Tinsley Ellis soon took his spin at the mike. He told us that he could be found at his college library for many years ...(Tinsley is a history enthusiast) During covid, Tinsley has written 200 songs and he and Bruce were currently narrowing down that catalog to produce the best of the lot. Tinsley had been with several labels. He chuckled as he talked about '50 ways to leave your label'. He finally had come over to Alligator. Bruce had suggested that Tinsley bring the guitar out front, that being his strongest suit. Tinsley, with a thoughtful look, said that he had a James Taylor inside that was dying to come out. Alligator was pushing him to be louder with rocking energy. Alas, Tinsley broke away and had his own label with no promotional help. Alligator and Tinsley once again teamed up. Alligator's help and support was infectious, making Tinsley work even harder to produce more amazing material.



Tommy Castro

Tommy Castro finally dropped into the engaging conversation. Tommy explained that Bruce Iglauer/Alligator Records had wanted total control over his music. Concerns and haggling ensued about the final product for the artist and the label. Simply put, Tommy said that Bruce did not trust him. They had a serious conversation about their 'issues' to reach an understanding and reasoning for how each saw the project. Bruce was soon bendable, allowing Tommy to take charge of the direction of his music. "My Old Town" was meant to be a guitar solo. Tommy had insisted on a piano solo.

Tommy held tight to that conviction. Tommy claims that he has learned to be more creative, take chances and to improve his songwriting skills. Alligator, he added, values their artists and their originality. With the onset of streaming, Alligator has helped their artists to get the most for their products with services for streaming royalties. Tommy had mentioned that Chris Cain had no idea that there was money to be had for his music that was being streamed. Again, Alligator was on top of things and set many wrongs right for their artists.

Bruce Iglauer as the talks proved was and is a visionary, bringing the best of the best for our listening pleasure. Fifty years walking 'his' musical journey has helped many artists and us, the Blues fans. Fifty years and there are no signs of slowing down for Bruce Iglauer nor Alligator Records. ~Jonnye Weber



Gigmaster Studios



Kip London



Pierce Dipner

The BSWPA is thrilled that our Blues Challenge winners, Kip London (Solo) and Pierce Dipner & Shades of Blue (Band) will soon be heading to the International Blues Challenge (May 6-9) in Memphis, TN.

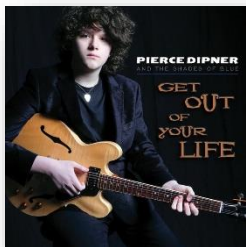


The Blues Society of Western PA wishes Soulful Femme (Cheryl Rinovato and Stevee Wellons) luck in their quest to win the Best Self-Produced CD competition with 'It is Well with my Soul' at that global event.

Western PA will be well represented!!

Pierce Dipner shares his thoughts about going back to Memphis as a competitor this go around.

When I look back on the most important and formative moments of my musical career so far, it is hard to not think about being a youth representative at the International Blues Challenge. I have been to Memphis as a youth representative twice, in both 2017 and 2019, and cite those two relatively short trips as some of the most important days in my career as a whole. Being a youth representative allows you to put your music on



display for a room packed full of die-hard Blues fans and some of the best musicians in the world. In fact, in 2019 my mentors for my performance were Amy Brat and Chris Barnes, who's advice I credit with forming me into the musician and performer I am today. Sometimes all a young musician needs is an opportunity to put themselves in front of a new and welcoming audience to find new success. From my time in Memphis, I was able to meet incredible musical friends, book festivals across the country and into Canada, and learn so much about Blues music as a whole. I believe that without the wealth of experience I took in

over my two times as a youth representative, and the one IBC I attended as an observing musician, I wouldn't've been able to succeed with my band and as a guitarist in the 2021 BSWPA Challenge. A dream of mine has always been to compete as a band in Memphis, and not only has my band earned the opportunity to do so this year, but I was also awarded the Jim Weber Guitar Award, which is an incredible honor. With the 2022 International Blues Challenge getting closer and closer, I have been thinking a lot about the bands I have seen succeed in Memphis, and the lessons

I have been taught by some of Blues' biggest names. With all this and an incredible band behind me I hope to represent Western Pennsylvania well. ~Pierce Dipner

A thank you from a Blues in the Schools student sponsored by the Blues Society of Western PA...



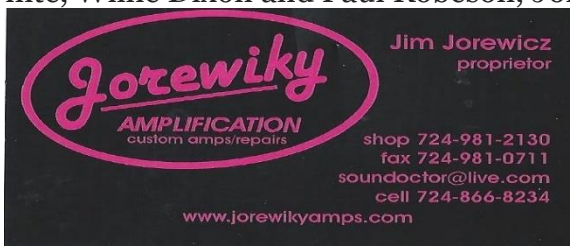
'For Those About To Rock' Academy has been a blessing. I have been going there since 2019. There are so many great people. They also have been helping me through a rough time. David, Cathy and Julie are the best instructors around.
~Michael Titus

*Thank you to the Blues members and Blues fans who make it possible for students to realize their dreams and develop new talents.



BigLou Johnson - *Bigman* GoldenVoice Audio Recordings

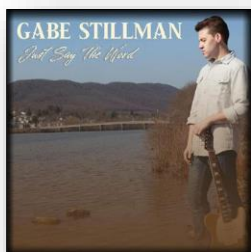
BigLou Johnson is one of the busiest men in show business. Not only is the longtime host of SiriusXM's *B.B. King's Bluesville*, but he's also a first-call emcee for blues festivals on land and sea and an award-winning commercial voiceover talent with dozens of Hollywood film and TV credits, too. He's in such demand that it's taken him seemingly forever to release a follow-up after *Catching Lightning in a Bottle* in 2013 and winning the Blues Music Award for new artist of the year for his debut CD, *They Call Me BigLou*. But it's definitely been worth the wait. A native Chicagoan who grew up on the West Side is now based out of greater Los Angeles. Big Lou has been a performer since playing the sax in cover bands and doing high school news reports for WVON radio as a teen. A former talent agent, he went from booking extras for TV and movies to appearing in the *Barbershop* films and doing commercials for White Castle, McDonald's, Phillips 66 and more. Despite that aspect of his life, he's always been a singer, too, touring internationally and recording as a member of Phava, a four-piece gospel group, performing as a member of the Oak Park (Ill.) Concert Chorale and recording albums with Polish vocalist Dorota Jarema and Chicago folk icon Andrew Calhoun. He became a blues vocalist at the insistence of Bill Wax, the legendary program director who hired him for his SiriusXM gig. Influenced by Howlin' Wolf, Barry White, Willie Dixon and Paul Robeson, Johnson was primarily a blues shouter on his



debut, delivering a set of seven covers and one original produced by harp player Russ Green with backing from an uncredited collection of top Windy City musicians. On this one, he proves himself to be a crooner who compares well to Barry White, Isaac Hayes and other basso profundo giants.

Recorded at Jookbox Studio in Memphis and Golden Voice Audio in Los Angeles in partnership with Keith Stewart, BigLlou penned four of the tracks with others written by Keith, Terry Abrahamson and Derrick Procell, Doug MacLeod and Ellis Hall, and he's backed by a moveable feast of top talent. The roster includes Joe Louis Walker, Gino Matteo, Isaiah Sharkey, Terrence "Sweet T" Grayson, Ellis Hall and Curt Morrison on guitars with Victor Wainwright, Tim Gant, Ellis Hall, Chris Stephenson, Josh Lava, James Pastman and Michael Raiford on keys. Also in the lineup are Anne Harris (strings), Mark Earley, Stewart, Doug Woolverton and Bill Overton (horns), Green and Morrison (harp), Anthony Dopsie (accordion), Felton Crews, Paul Martin and Ricky Nelson (bass) and Nelson, Raiford, Jim Widlowski and Kaylan Pathak (percussion). Dwight Dukes, Ellis Hall, Amanda Joyce, Monique Whittington and Monico Whittington provide backing vocals. A blast from the horns and a brief guitar run kick off the blazing "Lightnin' Strike," a smooth declaration from BigLlou that he's coming to your town — and "you better be prepared because storm clouds say you'd better beware" because "a righteous woman ain't got a prayer." The blues kick in South Side-style for "Bigman," follows. The tempo slows to a steady shuffle and heats up with harp solo to open "Chill on Cold," a cautionary tale that describes a woman who goes after her male prey "like a gator hunts the swamp and makes love to fools until she gets what she wants," before BigLlou goes on the prowl himself with "Let's Misbehave," an unhurried ballad in which Johnson turns on the charm and politely asks a lady who's in a relationship for a "horizontal dance" because another chance might not come along. "Shucky Ducky (Quack Quack)" is up next. A lush, medium-paced shuffle, it describes a beauty who always sits in the front row when BigLlou performs, but never seems able to say the trademark phrase of the title correctly despite trying desperately to do so with a look of delight. It flows into "Sunshine on You Face," a love song that will surprise you because it's acoustic and propelled by stellar runs from Harris on violin. "Stuff to Do," a call-and-response pleaser, is built atop a rapid-fire bottom before the ballad "I Got the Fever" serves up love for the blues as it describes a romance that's just gone bad. "Never Get Over Me," the most interesting tune in the set, opens as a ballad with layered strings, picks up speed and professes that the singer's such a great lover that he'll be on his lady's mind long after they've parted before the catchy, gospel-tinged "Beezthatwaysometimes" brings the disc to a pleasing close. One listen to *Bigman* and you'll have even greater appreciation for BigLlou Johnson than you've had before. It's that good! Strongly recommended for fans of classic soul-blues. ~ Marty Gunther





Just Say the Word

Gabe Stillman

From the roaring slide guitar figure that opens “Give Me Some Time,” on Gabe Stillman’s new *Just Say the Word*, it’s clear that this youthful musician from Pennsylvania is steeped in the blues. Stillman’s 2020 release, *Flying High* was a collaborative effort that featured the guitarist backed by renowned heartland blues outfit The Nighthawks. It was an effective paring that reflected well upon all involved. As fine a collection of performances as *Flying High* was, on *Just Say the Word*, Stillman truly comes into his own. His artistry and command of the guitar is front and center. For *Just Say the Word*, the guitarist demonstrates that he deserves sole billing, supported by well-chosen guests. One cut features two fellow guitarists guesting: Blues Music Award nominee (and the album’s producer) Anson Funderburgh and Ottawa-born guitarist Sue Foley, Juno Award and 17-time Maple Blues Award winner. Another tune features harmonica wizard Greg Izor. The Texas Horns add their flavor to several of the album’s tracks. The new album doesn’t represent Stillman’s first crack at recording “Give Me Some Time.” That original tune was the opening track on a five-song EP from 2018, *The Grind*. That release was an effective calling card, a method of letting the world know that this Berklee-trained guitarist had plenty to offer. Two other tracks on *Just Say the Word* are new versions of songs from *The Grind* as well. But these new recordings are anything but retreads; the stinging lead guitar work, sparkling production values and spirited backing prove that their inclusion on the new record is a wise move. Horn sections aren’t generally thought of as subtle; that’s not their typical role. But the crack ensemble work of the Texas Horns on “Let it Go” adds to the excitement of the arrangement without overwhelming it. Even as the horns punctuate the phrases with soulful, Stax-flavored breaks, Stillman’s guitar and expressive vocals remain the focal point. And the musical dialogue between his leads and the brass on “Let it Go” is reminiscent of Duane Allman’s similar interplay on Boz Scaggs’ bravura “Loan Me a Dime.” On “No Time for Me,” Stillman’s vocals are overdriven just a bit – not unlike the manner in which a classic Green Bullet mic distorts a blues harmonica – and that texture matches up nicely with the growl of his guitar. Here as throughout the album, Stillman’s lead guitar breaks are long, but they never overstay their welcome; in fact they leave the listener hungry for more. Stillman takes a careful step toward topicality with “No Peace for a Soldier,” but his original lyrics tell a relatable story without getting preachy or jingoistic. Still, many listeners will have come for the guitar work, and the tune – with more thrilling Texas Horns work – does not disappoint. The album’s title track is boot-scootin’ dance blues, with a swinging beat and

an appealing retro feel. And the rural-meets-sleek vibe of “Alabama Wildflowers,” a road musician’s paean to home, proves that Stillman can dial down the intensity and still deliver a song that’s lyrically and musically resonant. A centerpiece of *Just Say the Word* is the simmering “Heartbreak Makes a Sound.” Featuring a wonderfully minimalist arrangement, the song is built around Stillman’s voice, some tinkling electric piano and some deeply romantic tenor saxophone.

The chugging “No Matter What You Wear” is a rousing guitar extravaganza, featuring Funderburgh and Foley (the latter adding backing vocals as well) layering their artistry into the mix. But those veteran artists’ contributions support Stillman’s vision, never overshadowing it. Blues harpist Greg Izor joins in on the fun for “Susquehanna 66,” providing an incendiary performance for the spirited instrumental in a jump blues style. His sparring with Stillman is breathtaking.

There’s no production artifice about *Just Say the Word*; it’s professional without being over-polished, gritty without a note out of place. It’s a fully-realized effort that sharply points the way toward a bright future for Gabe Stillman. ~Bill Kopp



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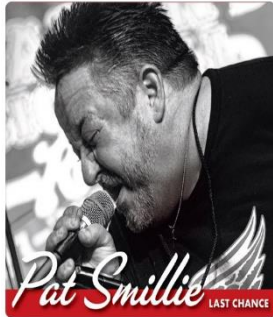
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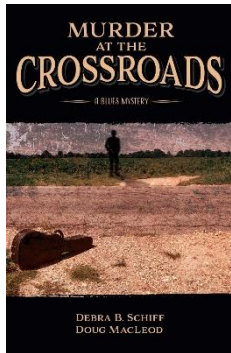
Last Chance Pat Smillie

Smillie's vocals are as powerful as a Ford pickup truck engine and so are the well-crafted original tunes. Smillie and Motor City Josh (a.k.a. Josh Ford) collaborated on the songwriting and production, which are top notch and a pleasure for the ears. Josh also contributes guitar and he is joined by many of the same players from the *Lonesome* sessions including: horn arranger and sax man Keith Kaminski, trumpeter Walter White, Evan Mercer on keys, guitarist Johnny Rhoades, backing vocalists Ashley Stevenson and Tina Howell, drummer/percussionist Todd Glass, and bassist Chris Smith. Guitarists Brendon Linsley and Jason Bone contribute to a couple tracks as well.

Last Chance kicks off with the Memphis soul overdrive of "Heart in a Headlock," featuring a blazing horn section and an incessant beat that will get bodies movin' and groovin' on the dance floor. Smillie sings his heart out about a love he just can't break away from. "Something on My Heart" finds the horn players blowing smooth and mellow on this mid-tempo Al Green/Otis Clay style ballad. Smillie sings solemnly about heartaches that you know he's lived through, as the "sweet soul sisters" comfort him with their harmonies. A groovy duet between pianist Mercer and guitarist Rhoades adds a special jazzy touch to this poetic tune. Guitar great Jim McCarty makes a guest appearance to play lead on "Broke Down Chevy #2," a reprise of Smillie's signature song that he previously recorded on a 2006 release, *Down By The River*, from his days in Chicago. "I was a broke down Chevy/ Until she loved me like a Cadillac"; Smillie sings it with gravel in his voice and redemption in his soul, backed by McCarty's tough, gritty guitar and a backbeat that's so funky you can smell it (to borrow a phrase from Buddy Guy).

Smillie and his crew take us down to New Orleans for the title track "Last Chance," featuring hip-shakin' Big Easy beats and Sonny Landreth-worthy slide guitar by Motor City Josh. "Tonight's your last chance/ To fall in love with me" is the final plea to a longtime lover who is now giving him the cold shoulder. "Josephine" has a cinematic, dreamy quality that recalls a misty bayou shrouded in mystery. Smillie weaves a tale about a duplicitous woman that is reminiscent of Levon Helm and The Band. "Drinkin' & Druggin' " is high octane rock 'n' roll about Smillie's former hard livin' lifestyle that was fun while it lasted, but nearly killed him. Having to spend "30 days locked up in Cook County" was the wakeup call that led to his sobriety.

Pat Smillie is a survivor; he's been buried in the blues and lived to tell about it in his music. As a tunesmith, he is an expert storyteller who writes about personal, yet universal, truths that come straight from the heart. And with every word he sings, Smillie gives us a little piece of his heart. The musicians he has aligned with in Motor City are the perfect fit for this talented artist's songs that can move both your body and your soul. For info or to buy the music: <https://patsmillie.com> ~Randall Parish, Vivasene



MURDER AT THE CROSSROADS

by Debra Schiff and Doug MacLeod

How does anyone make peace with the paths they choose at crucial “crossroads” in their lives? For Eddie Baker, a middle-aged black man, those decisions are literally life-or-death matters. As a teenager, he secretly witnesses the lynching of a civil rights worker in Mississippi in the early 1960s. He flees the dangers of the South to Chicago and is able to forge a career as a blues guitarist. But even over 30 years later, in 1992 Los Angeles, he is still haunted by the horrific act he was powerless to stop. When a former Klansman is at long last prosecuted for the crime, Eddie reluctantly travels back to his Mississippi hometown for the trial. After the murder of the DA’s star witness, Eddie is pursued by someone who knows what he witnessed and wants him silenced forever.

Murder at the Crossroads provides an insider’s guide to the ups and downs of a struggling blues musician. Eddie is helped by real-life blues greats and characters, a sidekick who has the body of a skinhead but the soul of a black bluesman, and loyal friends. Standing in his way are vengeful white supremacists, the animosity of a wronged woman, and his own fears and weaknesses. Eddie has a final shot at redemption. He must somehow find the path that leads to justice for a victim of past crimes while preventing another murder from happening, his own! Purchase at: [Amazon](#) and [Barnes and Noble](#)



Playing the Blues forward is the mission at hand these days. It is always encouraging to see young, brilliant players make their way in the Blues world. One such player, Gabe Stillman, made his Blues Cruise debut recently. Gabe, Guitarist of the Year and recently nominated for Best Emerging Album of the Year, was exciting to watch as he melded into the ever vibrant mix of International players. Gabe held his own with each encounter. After returning stateside, Gabe Stillman was asked to share his thoughts about mixing it up with all the seasoned and storied musicians.

Gabe Stillman Thoughts and Experience on the LRBC

I hope I can say that my first time performing on the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise was not my last. From the beginning of my professional music career and introduction to the blues scene, I had dreamed of performing on the LRBC. The way people talk about the cruise, fans and musicians alike, has been so alluring to me. It was clear from hearing their words that the cruise is more than a gig, it’s an experience that allows each participant to feel equal without the typical barriers of many live performances. I crave that feeling in perpetuity throughout my career.

At many festivals, clubs, bar gigs, etc. the artists are kept separate from their fans. The audience and performer are connected during the show and almost immediately after, in most cases, the artist has to fulfill other responsibilities. Whether it be selling merch (which allows for some interaction with fans), settling with the buyer (sometimes a harder task than it should be), tearing down/loading out and maybe even having to drive to the next town that night, whatever the reason the artist only gets a finite amount of time to “hang” with their fans at a gig.

NOT THE CASE ON THE CRUISE! You have a whole week without boundaries and barriers to interface with one another. The celebration of life that live music is all about can truly be enjoyed without backstage exclusivity and artists, music fans, industry representatives are allowed to enjoy each other on a deep human level. I wish it could happen more often across the board but, at any rate, it makes the blues cruise very special.

Also, it's one of the few experiences that I've had where every artist is not only encouraged but, in many cases, required to jam with one another. This doesn't happen often and when it does, it allows for so much rawness and realness to happen in the music because there has to be more spontaneity. There was a moment on this last cruise where I was watching my friend and producer, Anson Funderburgh, trade licks with the fabulous Coco Montoya as well as Chris Vachon from Roomful of Blues and I thought to myself: *This may never happen again*. The same thoughts came over me while I was standing on stage simultaneously with Mr. Sipp and Victor Wainwright, and at a separate jam with Christone "Kingfish" Ingram and Albert Castiglia! I live for those moments in music. I look at every performance as special but when musicians have the opportunity to share their soul with one another in a true moment of improvisation, that's MAGIC!

I'm grateful for the privilege to be a part of that magic on this last cruise. And as someone who is self-aware that I'm fresh on the scene, I was thrilled that I received a lot of positive feedback from artists who I've looked up to for years. And, to be welcomed with open arms by the fans, many of whom have been cruisers for over a decade, meant everything to me. It was a dream come true and a life changing experience!

--Gabe Stillman gabestillmanmusic@gmail.com 570-419-3891

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Soul Shaker **Robbin Kapsalis & Vintage #18**

“Soul Shaker” is the second release for Robbin Kapsalis and Vintage #18. The band, who have been playing together for eight years now, consist of: Robbin on vocals; Bill Holter on guitar; Mark Chandler on Bass; Alex Cudell on drums and percussion; Ron Halloway on saxophone; and Thomas Williams and Vince McCool on trumpet.

Having emceed several shows that featured Robbin and the guys, I can honestly say that this act is a force to be reckoned with...from her custom made all white mic and stand, to her all-white tasseled outfits, to the way her gyrations wildly toss those tassels around, Robbin simultaneously raises both the flair and energy bars to a whole other level.

On the one sheet that accompanied the album, Robbin claims that the band’s goal was to “*Bring that Live Energy we’re known for*” to each and every song. That said, it wasn’t very long into the disc’s track, “Shake it Baby” (Blackmore/Guy), before that statement was validated. The track opens with Mark laying down some seriously deep bass grooves; Alex having no mercy on the drum kit; and Bill tearing off smokin’ guitar riffs; basically, it is a three-way musical slug fest. Then, shortly after the boss lady starts singing and howling the Blues, Ron and Vince hit the ground with their horn running and yes, all hell is now breaking loose. No further explanation is necessary.

“Living Large” (Deb Ryder) is one of the slower tracks of the bunch. With Mark and Alex in a sweet groove and Bill getting in some scorching slow blues licks, the song pretty much features Robbin putting on a vocals 101 class. Showing you don’t need to be a soprano to hit the high notes, Robbin-with that deep voice her family teased her about as a kid- showcases her absolutely fabulous range.

From very well-known vocalists to local lounge acts of any genre of music, if you had a dollar for everyone-male or female- who has ever sang this song, you’d be able to put a large dent in the national deficit. That said, the versions that give me a “Fever” (Cookley/Davenort) are a jazzy one performed by a sultry sounding woman like a Sarah Vaughan or a Peggy Lee, the one who pretty much started it all. Speaking of a sultry singer, Robbin is indeed doing the song justice on this hybrid version. Hybrid in that she’s got the steamy, jazzy thing going on with the vocals; Mark’s bass lines sound as good as any jazz bassist I have ever heard; Alex’s edgy drum work has a bit of a rock vibe and the way he’s bending those strings, Bill’s playing the Blues. So, the next time I see Robbin live, I will be looking forward to hearing a smoker called, “Cannonball” (Williams) and with the band in pedal to the metal mode and the attitude of Robbin’s belting this one out with, I can’t wait for the sizzling, visual effects.

This disc closes with it’s second performance of “You Don’t Deserve Me”. It’s officially called the “Extended Groove”, but for all intensive purposes let me just say it’s the twice as long, steroidal version of the first performance. Not being the type of woman, you want to ‘upset’, if you’re the kind of man who stays out so late that the only things 15.

open are a bottle of gin and a pair of legs that don't belong to her, it's probably in your best interest never to come home at all.

Other tracks are "Soul Shaker" that will get more than your soul shakin' are: "Lost Souls", the shorter version of "You Don't Deserve Me"; "Jukin"; "From the Hearts of One"; and "Silver Spoon".

www.vintage18.net ~Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro, 2011 Keeping the Blues Alive Award recipient. Blues editor@www.Mary4Music.com

***I had the pleasure of listening to Robbin on the latest Blues cruise...she blew us away! Give Robbin Kapsalis a listen. ~Jonny Weber

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