

Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania www.bscpblues.com

# **BLUES NEWS**

Oct.- Dec. 2021



# Andrew Duncanson The Kilborn Alley Blues Band (p. 4)

2021 Christmas Party

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# From your President...

Life has been quite busy the past couple of months with so many opportunities to hear live music in open venues. I remind myself daily to make the most of what is available today and to enjoy every moment. The reality is that people are dying from Covid and many hospitals are over-filled. I want to see and hear and do it all, to store up the experiences to remember if we have a dark winter.

The drive I feel to hear music and to dance comes from making up for last year and preparing for possible shut downs in the future. But there is more to it. I just read an article where the author, Scott Ainslie, pointed out that music is not just "arts and entertainment" but " is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds."

Ainslie talks about the Holocaust and 9/11, describes the role of artists, especially musicians, and the exceptional music they created while in concentration camps and before the dust settled from the collapsed towers. He noted that people gathered to sing the evening of 9/11 and many attended a concert. He points out that music is consistently a part of major life events that are accompanied by deep emotions, such as weddings and funerals. My thoughts turned to the televised scenes of people around the world opening their windows and singing with each other during the pandemic shutdown.

The article, which is posted on the BSCP Facebook page, made me realize at a deeper level the mission of the Blues Society. We exist not just to provide entertainment, but to encourage and provide opportunities for the creation and expression of music in our community. And if there is any music that touches our hearts and souls and provides an avenue for feeling, expression and healing, it is the blues.

BSCP has made an extra effort this summer to provide a stage for musicians to play on and events for blues lovers to attend. As well, we have been fortunate to have several events in the area to support. In case you missed them, see pages 8-9.

Blues lovers are looking forward to the Lancaster Roots and Blues Festival October 15-17 where several local blues bands will be playing along with outstanding national acts (pps. 14-15). November 19-21 will be The Reading Blues Festival with greats such as Victor Wainwright and King Solomon Hicks (p. 13).

Sunday, December 5, at 1:30 pm the BSCP Annual Christmas Party will return to the Hummelstown Fire Department at 249 E. Main St, featuring Kilborn Alley for your listening and dancing pleasure (p. 4). In addition to these events, see BSCPblues.com website for local gigs.

Feed your soul, heal your heart, and keep on moving... with the blues!



Kathryn Gregoire bluesmunga@gmail.com

### **Mission Statement**

The Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation, promotion, support and enjoyment of the truly original American art form, the blues.

### In Memoriam

#### by Jackson Fogel



### Mike Finnigan

April 26, 1945 - August 11, 2021

Mike Finnigan began his professional music career when he was only 19 years old and attending the University of Kansas on a basketball scholarship. During his time as a keyboardist, vocalist, and session musician, Finnigan was able to play with everyone from Jimi Hendrix to Taj Mahal. He often spent his time as a freelance studio musician and specialized in the B3 Hammond organ.



#### **Roy Gaines**

August 12, 1937 - August 11, 2021

When Roy Gaines was six years old, he learned to play the piano. His mother always encouraged musical talent, and Gaines took to it with passion. When he was fourteen, he became inspired by his brother, the late Grady Gianes, and his skill on the saxophone, so he picked up the guitar. He spent most of his career as a sideman, playing for big names like Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder, and released a few albums of his own between 1982 and 2009.



#### Berbon "Bubba" Sullivan

August 5, 1940 - August 18, 2021

Although Berbon "Bubba" Sullivan did not play any instruments, his impact on blues was strong, nonetheless. He was a founding member of the Sonny Boy Blues Society and the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Arkansas, which was responsible for cementing the town in the history of Delta blues as the spiritual descendant of the "King Biscuit Time" radio show. He also owned and operated Bubba's Blues Corner, a record shop loved by fans and artists alike.



#### **Patrick Verbeke**

April 13, 1949 - August 22, 2021

Across the Atlantic, Patrick Verbeke was a French blues artist who worked tirelessly to highlight the influence of African-American music on French blues and national culture. For years, Verbeke performed for high school, college and young adult audiences, during which he would take time to teach the history of blues music and praise some of his heroes, like Eric Clapton. Blues in my Soul, his first solo album, released in 1981.



#### **Charlie Watts**

June 2, 1941 - August 24, 2021

Charlie Watts, who found fame as the drummer for the Rolling Stones, got his start in blues as a member of the band Blues Incorporated while he played the London rhythm and blues club circuit. In his 58-year tenure with the Rolling Stones, he featured on every one of the band's studio albums, and in 1989 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. A critically acclaimed drummer, Watts always cited jazz as the major influence on his drumming style.



### **Byther Smith**

April 17, 1932 - September 10, 2021

When Byther Smith was a teenager, he spent his weekends playing in country western bands while his fellow farm hands taught him how to jam on a double bass. He became known for his powerful guitar playing and emotional singing, integrating his gospel singing roots with the rhythms he picked up playing in Chicago clubs. He toured alongside Big Mama Thorton and George "Harmonica" Smith in the '70s and released a wealth of his own blues albums over the years.



#### **Warner Williams**

May 7, 1930 - September 20, 2021

Born in Tacoma Park, MD, "Guitar Man" Warner Williams is considered one of the great unsung blues players and songsters. A recipient of a 2011 National Heritage Fellowship, Warner Williams was part of a Piedmont Blues trio Little Bit A Blues. Their 2013 album The Best of Little Bit A Blues: Live at B.B. King's Bluesville reached number one on the Blues411 chart and received nominations for WAMMIE and JIMI Awards for Recording of the Year.

# The Kilborn Alley Blues Band

by Bill Halaszynski



We all have that moment when the blues bug first bites us. In many cases we just stumble upon it and can't shake loose from its grasp. Kilborn Alley singer/guitarist Andrew Duncanson discovered the music as a boy in the early 1990's.

He was spellbound by his father's Robert Johnson cassettes and knew he had to dive deeper into the sound and emotions. B.B. King's soulful style also took hold. The combination of Johnson's raw release with King's soulful swagger would eventually take root in his own music.

Duncanson got his first guitar at age 15 and began getting more serious about music. In 2000 he formed The Kilborn Alley Blues Band along with fellow Champaign, Illinois resident bassist Chris Breen and guitar player Josh Stimmel while they were all still in high school. They worked at writing their own material while developing a distinctive sound. In 2003 they released their self-titled debut.

Kilborn Alley signed with Nick Moss' Blue Bella Records, releasing Put it in the Alley in 2006. They came wailing out of the gate with an intensity and swagger all their own. It was classic sounding blues that were at once timeless and immediate.

The band's tenure with Blue Bella

lasted for three more releases, culminating in 2011 with a fourth. Harp player Joe Asselin and drummer Ed O'Hara joined Duncanson, Breen and Stimmel to form a potent lineup during that period both on record and live.

I first saw them in 2008 at the Wheeling Heritage Blues Fest as part of the Blue Bella Review during the day and at the after jam that night. They stood out among a stellar lineup that weekend. Stimmel's stinging fretwork and Duncanson's soul drenched vocals demanded attention, but the entire band played at the same high level.

Kilborn Alley also released <u>Tear Chicago</u> <u>Down</u> (2007) and <u>Better Off Now</u> (2010) for Blue Bella. They began to play nationally as well as internationally. They also received several Blues Music Awards nominations during those years.

As the 2010's wore on the band took six years to release their next recording. The Tolono Tapes came out on Run It Back Records in 2017. It included many guest performers and new drummer/vocalist Aaron "aTrain" Wilson.

The band's sound was as strong as ever. They were aided by the contributions of top tier talent the likes of Mike Welch, Anthony Geraci, Henry Gray, Bob Corritore,

Corey Dennison, Gerry Hunt vocalist Jackie Scott and harmonica player Ronnie Shellist. Kilborn Alley thrived in the role of house band collaborating with their guests on originals as well as remakes of their own work and a nice cover with Gray.

Next up came the recording of <u>Here and There</u> which will also be released on Run It Back Records and took place during sessions throughout 2018 and 2019. Covid-19 threw a monkey wrench into the works delaying release 'til the end of this year. Keyboardist Jim Pryor who studied under Brother Jack McDuff and gospel/soul vocalist Laquisha Burries took part in the sessions adding the promise of even deeper shades of soul to the sound.

Josh Stimmel appears on the upcoming record but has made the decision to move on from the band into family business. Pryor and his keyboards will be on board when they appear at the BSCP Christmas Show. Duncanson plans on bringing along a guest guitarist that day. After twentyone years The Kilborn Alley Blues Band is ready to move on in a post pandemic blues scene no matter what that looks like. Recent live recordings show Duncanson to be in strong vocal shape and the band sounds ready to roar.

# A Peek at the Past

### by Kathryn Gregoire

During the early Blues Society years, there were informal pot-luck Christmas parties at Dot and Buster's home and at the 40 & 8 Club and Liquid 9 Club. Virginia "Mom I" Ivanoff, Dot Grubb and Beverly McCormick always made sure there was plenty of ham and turkey. In the spirit of Christmas, "Mom I" would often set up a Toys for Tots station. In 2010, the decision was made to hold a Christmas Party event at the Hummelstown Fire Department Hall and the tradition has continued. For a walk down memory lane, enjoy looking at Greg Hogg's comprehensive collection of pictures on BSCPblues.com under MORE - Photo Gallery. Here is a sample from the 2010-2014 Christmas Parties.





















# Blues Biz

## **Bobby Gentilo**

#### By KATHRYN GREGOIRE

Recently I was at the Right Coast Studio to watch the recording of two new songs by Clarence Spady. On break, his bass player, Andy Galore, who is from Germany and currently living in Brooklyn, NY, commented to me. "This is my first time here. The minute I walked in the door, I knew I was at home."

I knew what he was talking about because that is exactly the vibe that the studio gives off – a welcoming, creative, open place to be with others and make your best music.

One of the owners of this music haven is Bobby Gentilo, a blues singer/songwriter, guitarist, international record producer, sound engineer, and videographer, who grew up in Washington, D.C., and moved to Baltimore for college. After living there 18 years, he moved to Lancaster County where he became a part of Right Coast Studio in 2001. The co-owner is Dave Wilkerson, the Chief Engineer and Technical Boffin (British slang for scientific expert in technology research).

Right Coast Studio services include production, on- and off-site recording, pro audio repair, transfers, restoration, construction, tracking, overdubs, mixing, editing, mastering, and acoustic/electronic system design.

Right Coast Recording has worked with many regional blues bands and such well-known musicians/bands as the Dixie Chicks, Bon Jovi, Tino Gonzales, Gearshifter, Jimmy Buffet, Billy Joel, LIVE, R.E.M., Tina Turner, Kenny Rogers, YES, Lenny Kravitz, Big Jack Johnson, Terry "Harmonica" Bean, and Cadillac John Nolden.

BSCP members know Gentilo as the musical genius who produced two excellent CDs In Our Backyard and Backyard Blues in his studio. Backyard Blues charted on the Roots Music Reports Top 50 Traditional and Contemporary Blues Albums and reached #2 on the PA Top 50 Albums this past year. Gentilo also hosted some of the BSCP Virtual Blues Jam Shows on Thursday evenings, especially those featuring Mississippi Delta and Hill Blues musicians.

Gentilo is a member of The Cornlickers, a Harrisburg PA based band that serves as the house band for Red's Juke Joint in Clarksdale, MS, backing Big Jack Johnson (W.C. Hardy Award Winner) until his death in 2011. Anthony "Big A" Sherrod and The Cornlickers received the Living Blues Best Debut Album for 2016 for Right On Time. As a Cornlicker, Gentilo helps bring the BSCP Mississippi Railroad event to Central PA every summer. Gentilo also recently formed the Mississippi Juke Ambassadors and started his own band.

The Bobby Gentilo Band consists of Bobby Gentilo (vocal/guitar), Jason Hoffeins (drums), Alex Degnan (bass), Aaron Lewis (harmonica/vocals), Logan Kurtek (baritone sax). Gentilo also has a trio with Christy Engel (drums) and Logan Kurtek (baritone sax).

### KG: How did your relationship with the blues start and how has it evolved?

Bobby: When I was around seven or eight years old, I saved enough money to buy Robin Trower's Bridge of Sighs. I felt something in that album that I wasn't getting from KISS. In the early 2000s I started traveling to Mississippi with Dale Wise, Dave Groninger and Tony Ryder to back up Big Jack Johnson. That first trip changed everything. I finally was experiencing the music that I had been hearing in my head for years but hadn't found yet. Mississippi blues can be raw, possessing a super deep groove, and groove will always get my attention. After 30 plus trips to Clarksdale and performing over 1,000 hours in Juke Joints and Hill Country house parties... Mississippi blues is in my blood, soul, and heart.

### KG: How did you get started in the studio business?

**Bobby:** I was always fascinated by the process, even as a young fellow. I would use two cassette players as a very rudimentary recording device. It must have sounded like cats fighting, but my Mom would listen and pretend it was not terrible. From there I slowly bought more equipment and teamed up with other musicians that had gear too. I helped build four or five small studios with bandmates and continued to learn more and more about the process.

Eventually I went to a real recording studio to record drums for a song I was producing with my band. I thought we would have a much better chance of getting a great drum recording in a real studio. What I learned was that a lot of recording engineers aren't interested in trying to take what's in your mind and help make it come to life. A lot of times they only have one way they know how to record a certain instrument and that's what you get. That never made sense to me and never will. So... I realized I had to learn a lot more about recording techniques and be knowledgeable enough to express what I was hearing in my mind. I always wanted to be a music producer, but not necessarily an engineer. But one day I woke and realized, damn it, you're an engineer.

### KG: How would you describe your studio business?

**Bobby:** Right Coast Recording is the brainchild of Dave Wilkerson and Dave Natale. They recruited me in 2001 to be a part of the team. We wanted to build a space that possessed an undeniable vibe, and that inspired musicians to create and explore. Though Dave Natale isn't a partner on paper anymore, he is still part of the Right Coast family and we still do things to help each other with all things recording.

We are a bit unique in that we are a mix between analog and digital, old school and new school. This isn't to be quirky, it's because analog tape sounds better. And computers have made many things way faster to accomplish which can certainly aid in workflow and productivity. We try to use the best of both worlds.

## KG: In what ways has studio work changed over the past 30 years?

**Bobby:** In some ways very little, bands and musicians recording live together in a space conducive to capturing their sound at a high level. Other things are much, much different. Technology has permitted musicians to record just about anywhere, then send their recordings to almost anywhere on earth in moments. This allows for all types of imaginative collaborations.

# KG: Speaking of collaborations, how did your well-received video "Neighbor, Neighbor," come about?

**Bobby:** When the pandemic hit, we were just about to leave for a month and a half tour of Europe, two years of planning erased. So, I knew I would lose my mind if I didn't find a project that inspired me and

captured my mind. I sat down with my guitar and "Neighbor, Neighbor" arrived, it came scary fast. Then I realized my musician friends from around the world also had their plans put on hold, so I asked them to work with me. Everyone recorded in their own spaces and sent me audio tracks over the internet to combine in my studio. My good friends, Logan Kurtek and Jerry King Musser, helped me edit the video for the song. We collaborate on many artistic adventures. There was so much magic that occurred during the production of this song, so many serendipitous moments.

# KG: What other videos have you recently done?

**Bobby:** Since 2018, I did "Hokha," "Ahora," and "Got This Feeling" with Carlos; "Chuma" and "Miguielito" with Carlos and Rubiel Pinillo and "Troublin" and "Catfish Blues" with my band. All can be viewed on YouTube or on my Facebook.

### KG: How long have you been with the Cornlickers?

**Bobby:** I joined The Cornlickers around 2007 and we are still doing our thing. We have been in the studio working on brand new material and it's stronger than ever. The four of us have something I could only dream of. Four friends who are willing to jump in a van, drive over 2,000 miles round trip to MS and back, play about 35 hours in

5 days and do it over 30 times together... for one reason... because MS Delta and Hill Country Blues is in our blood, it's not a hobby or a game, it's real. And our tour manager Hannah Sherman was there for damn near every step!!!!

### KG: What are some of the projects you have done with Carlos Elliot?

**Bobby:** Since 2013, we have released 5 albums along with different audiovisual pieces which have achieved prominent positions in national radio and TV charts. Our songs reached #1 in Colombia multiple times. Carlos Elliot and The Cornlickers represented Colombia, South America, at the 2014 International Blues Challenge in Memphis. We have toured in South America and Europe accompanied by R.L. Boyce.

### KG: Could you tell me a little about the Mississippi Juke Ambassadors.

**Bobby:** The Mississippi Juke Ambassadors were formed to take the MS juke joint experience to people in the world that may not have the opportunity to travel to the southern part of the United States. Every artist in MJA has over 1,000 hours performing in MS juke joints and hill country house parties. We were scheduled to tour in Europe in 2020 but the pandemic had other plans. The tour has been rescheduled for 2022. See The Mississippi

Juke Ambassadors Facebook.

### KG: What projects do you have going on now?

**Bobby:** I am working on two new albums for Carlos Elliot and albums for The Wild Hymns, Copper Bets. The Inca Campers, The Dime Store Dolls. And... I'm releasing my first solo album by the end of 2021. I have also done some initial planning with BSCP to do a video of Mississippi Delta and Hill musicians.

# KG: What inspires you to create, to make music, to meet challenges, to persist?

**Bobby:** There is beautiful music in my mind, it's always been there, and I will always be inspired to capture this music. I also get a lot of inspiration from other artists that I collaborate with.

### KG: What do you look forward to in the future?

**Bobby:** I'm looking forward to touring with Carlos Elliot in September and October in the States and getting back to South America in November. We will be performing two shows at the Lancaster Roots and Blues Festival and I will be hosting a jam after the Saturday night shows.

To follow Bobby Gentilo, go to www.bobbygentilo.com











The Cornlickers

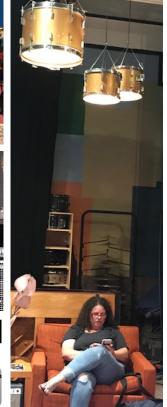








Tony Ryder



# In Case You Missed It





















- 07/18/21 Summer Show pics by Greg Hogg
- 08/22/21 BSCP MS RR pics by Greg Hogg
- 09/04/21 East Petersburg Blues Fest pics by Ken Rimondi
- 09/05/21 Baltimore Blues Society Alonzo Picnic pics by Ken Rimondi
- 09/19/21 BSCP The Mighty Klucks and Clarence Spady & The Electric City Band - pics by Greg Hogg and Ken Rimondi





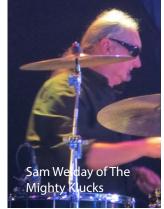


























# MEET YOUR BSCP BOARD MEMBERS!

By Hannah Sherman

# "Dancin' Dot" Grubb



As a new feature of Blues News, we are introducing our first "get to know you" article. We hope you enjoy learning a little about some of your fellow BSCP Board Members and will introduce yourselves to them if you don't know them and enjoy the fellowship of being around people with the same interest – the love of the blues!

You know that woman who goes around asking for money for the donation jar at the jam? Maybe you know her as the one who checks you in at events (asking for money again!). She's mainly the one who is usually first on the dance floor with a smile and a look of bliss on her face. That's "Dancin' Dot". She has been with the BSCP Board since its inception as the treasurer for years, as a main force in the kitchen for events, and as a creator of gift baskets to raffle (again the money). Dot is currently a "Member-At-Large" on the BSCP Board

Dot became interested in music in high school when she received a record player for her sixteenth birthday. Listening to Bill Haley first gave her the love of dancing. Later in life, a neighbor asked her to take him to Paradise Alley. He went for a couple of weeks but she never stopped. She enjoyed national and regional acts on Mondays and local bands the rest of the week.

Festivals are the favorite venues Dot has experienced in her years of music. She attended every Pocono Blues Festival from its beginnings until it was moved to Blue Mountain. She remembers seeing Johnny Clyde Copeland as the only headliner to appear twice. He signed a tank top for her and, years later, his daughter, Shemekia, signed the same top. Shemekia also introduced Dot to her mother on one of the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruises. Dot says, "The cruises were great! "Mom I"(Virginia Ivanoff) went with us on one for our honeymoon!" Now Dot enjoys the weekly jam, the Grotto on Tuesdays, and local events. "I want all the young ones to go now in my place. The easiest way for people to get to know the blues is to go to festivals."

Her major influences were Krypton City Blues Revue, Dr. John, and Johnny Johnson. When she was interviewed with Johnson he put his arm around her and said, "You made my night!"

When asked what is something that people don't know about her she immediately replied, "That I used to be very shy and bashful and couldn't talk to people. I found I could talk about blues and that opened up the door. It's helped so many people going through trying times when things are tough and hard."

Virginia Ivanoff: She rescued me! She got me into the BSCP. She grabbed me at Mr. G's and said, "You come and sit with me." She couldn't get rid of me! We went to festivals and everywhere. The rest is history.

Mary Mammola: What can I say that hasn't been said already. She's very giving.

Carrie Baker: For me she's a Godsend – always cooking for me and having me over for dinner and giving me stuff. She's become my family – has me over for Chistmas when I don't have anywhere to go. She provides wisdom. She always has my back.

Rocky Rothrock: Two outstanding things are she feeds everybody. It's an instinctive need and we love everything

she makes. She's always cooking and it's great. The other thing is she is great at fundraising.

Kathy Gregoire: I first started noticing Dot because she would always be out dancing at the jams, inspiring me to do the same thing. Dot is one of the most resourceful, creative, and generous people I know, always making sure everyone is taken care of. She not only watches out for me but my family as well. She takes great joy in life and is always looking to celebrate it.

Dot is a collector - and she surrounds herself with items she loves. I have never seen a yard with so many colorful and unique garden artifacts, statutes, and furniture, oftentimes painted and blinged by her. Her house at Christmas time is one to be toured, with a themed Christmas tree and accompanying decorations in each room. Dot has a hat for every occasion, lovingly designed by her. The one she wore for her wedding with Buster is on display on their porch. Her garage is a repository of clothing and other items she collects from others and then donates locally. A passionate supporter of BSCP, she is the best collector of money and is rightly known as the Tip Jar Queen. Throughout the years, she has collected multiple blues experiences which she shares in delightful stories. Most of all, she collects friends who are so fortunate to be part of her everyday life.

Beverly McCormick: When we wanted to start a blues society, I was looking for a way to raise money to get it going. Wonderful Dot came to the rescue of the blues society out of the goodness of her heart. She came up with the idea of raffling off liquor baskets and made up a list of 17 local clubs where we sold tickets. She was the savior of the blues society.

Hannah Sherman: Dot is like family to me – not just the blues family. We have enjoyed festivals, cruises, trips to Clarksdale, and just about every event BSCP has put on. She and Buster provide me with a home away from home. She is one of the most generous people I know. Something else people don't know about Dot – she has an incredible green thumb. When you see her garden, you almost can't believe it!

# **Lowell Fulson**

#### by Dave "Dr. Mo" Moyar



Atoka, Oklahoma, is not a place usually associated with the blues. Not a place usually associated with much of anything. But in 1921, on a Choctaw reservation, a child was born that would later become an innovator and legendary performer of blues music. Lowell Fulson was born to Mamie and Martin Fulson on March 31, 1921. His mother was black, and his father was Choctaw. After his father's death, he moved with his mother and brothers to Clarita. From a young age he became interested in playing musical instruments including piano and guitar. By age 18 he was an accomplished soloist and accompanist and joined Alger "Texas" Alexander, replacing Chester Burnett (Howlin Wolf).

Alexander was a popular performer, having recorded with The Mississippi Sheiks, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and Sam "Lightnin" Hopkins and many others. Known for his powerful and deep voice, Alexander played no instruments, and is considered one of the originators of the "Blues Shouter" style. Fulson worked with Alexander, playing in Oklahoma and the Brazos River bottomlands. This experience taught Fulson many lessons about life on the road and leading a band. He was exposed to many different types of music, often citing Bob Wills and his guitarist Eldon Shamblin as a major influence in his playing.

Fulson was drafted into the Navy in 1943 and was discharged at the end of the war. He immediately set out to return to performing. Fulson admired another Texas guitarist, Aaron "T-Bone" Walker, whose jump style swing music and larger band he wished to emulate. Mining the available resources for



talented musicians in Texas and Oklahoma, he hired a young blind piano player named Ray Charles and a Texas tenor saxophone player named Stanley Turrentine. These two musicians would be the first of many talented players who would pass through his band on their way to fame on their own, including King Curtis, David "Fathead" Newman, Leroy Cooper, Lloyd Glen, and Earl Brown.

By 1948, Fulson was getting restless remaining a regional "territory band" and, following in the footsteps of T-Bone Walker, moved his base of operation to California. In 1948 he scored his first hit with the selfpenned "Three O-Clock Blues," later a hit for B.B. King. He continued to record for Swingtime Records through the 50s. The many jukebox hits he had at that time included "Every Day I Have The Blues" and "Blue Shadows." Both later covered by B.B. King, the latter moving all the way to number one on the R&B charts in 1950. The same year he recorded the mid-tempo instrumental "Low Society Blues" which ushered in a new style to the blues vocabulary.

By 1954 Chess Records picked up his contract and featured him on their subsidiary label Checker Records. With Checker, he had another great success with the single "Reconsider Baby," probably the most covered song in his catalogue. Fulson never felt comfortable with the Chicago label, stating that the rougher Chicago style players never accepted his more "Uptown Blues" style. He eventually left Checker and was picked up by Kent Records. On the Kent label he again had a top 10 R&B hit with "Black Nights," his first in a decade. This was



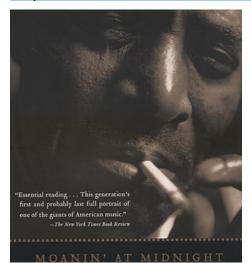
followed the next year by the song "Tramp," providing him with a major crossover hit. The song was a clear departure from the more traditional and swing blues that Lowell was famous for, propelling him into the burgeoning Soul/R&B scene. The song was covered the same year as a duet by Otis Redding and Carla Thomas.

Fulson continued to record on many labels, most notably Rounder and Bullseye, even recording a cover of "Why Don't We Do It In The Road" by The Beatles. Whenever critics would question his departures from more traditional blues, he responded that he wanted to expand the horizons of what was considered blues, even calling his 1995 album released on Bullseye "Them Update Blues". He continued to tour with his large band playing his old and newer music throughout the 1990s.

In 1993 he headlined a touring review called "California Blues: Swingtime Tribute" with his band backing not only him, but also Johnny Otis, Charles Brown, Jay McShann, Jimmy Witherspoon, Jimmy McCracklin and Earl Brown. His last recording was a duet with Jimmy Rogers on the album "Jimmy Rogers Allstars: Blues Blues Blues," redoing his earlier recording of "Every Day I Have The Blues." At the age of 77, Lowell Fulson died in Long Beach California in 1999 of complications associated with kidney disease, diabetes, and congestive heart failure. Throughout his career, Lowell Fulson was a pioneer of the blues, often pushing the boundaries of what was considered acceptable, and never doubting his vision. For this he has been the recipient of many awards and recognitions

# **BLUES BOOK CORNER**

### By KATHRYN GREGOIRE



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

Chester Arthur Burnett, nicknamed "Wolf" by his maternal Grandfather Jones, was born on Friday, June 10, 1910, at White Station, Mississippi. Over the course of two months, book club members discussed the characteristics that made Howlin' Wolf unique, an outstanding performer, and a musical genius. They explored the contributions of his difficult upbringing, complicated personality, varied life experiences, and enduring personal philosophies to his early musical success in the Delta region and urban Chicago, and in the 1960's when he was "rediscovered."

Giving us deeper insights into the music, Hank Imhoff sang and played Howlin' Wolf classics "Red Rooster" on a 1930 Triolian National Steel guitar and "Spoonful" on a 1917 Washburn parlor style guitar. Both songs of the era discussed for Wolf and others. Spoonful exemplified the one chord modal sound that Wolf and other players like Muddy and John Lee Hooker used to be true to their Delta roots. We discussed how other chords of the progression were implied by

# HOWLIN' WOLF: MOANIN' AT MIDNIGHT

one or two notes but not used until later renditions by more modern artists were recorded.

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

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

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

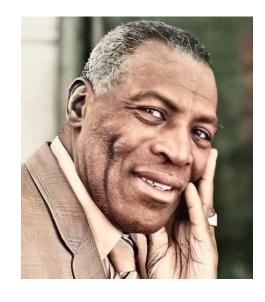
Thomas Cook: I had listened to Mr. Wolf for a long time but didn't know much beyond what I read in liner notes. I was very interested to learn that he was good at business and paid his sidemen fairly and well. This is unusual; probably unique

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

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

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

The BSCP Blues Book Club meets the third Monday of the Month from 11 am – 1 pm. To participate in the BSCP Blues Book club, please email Kathy at bluesmunga@gmail.com.



### **CD** Reviews



### Veronica Lewis YOU AIN'T UNLUCKY (Blue Heart Records)

Growing up with a mom who knew how to rock the piano, I must admit that I am partial to boogie-woogie piano music. So when I came across Veronica Lewis doing a virtual show during the pandemic, I could hardly contain my excitement watching her pounding on the keys.

Veronica Lewis, a singer/songwriter and keyboardist, is truly amazing. At age 17, she has written songs and produced music beyond her years, a Beethoven Blues genius. With a 1950s vibe channeling another Lewis (Jerry Lee), she has exploded on the scene with her self-produced album You Ain't Unlucky. Her piano playing is described as "having the power of a summer thunderstorm in the Delta."

Her original songs tell stories with a healing message and an emphasis on just how fun the blues can be. She is "done spendin' good time on a bad time anymore" and she inspires us to do the same with her "can't sit down" music. She belts out "Let's have some fun!"

Lewis wrote six of the eight songs and plays piano and sings in all of them with her clear, powerful, expressive voice. While all the music is high energy with a strong driving beat, each song is a little different. She deftly matches up the songs with different drummers: Mike Walsh, Ben Rogers, and Chris Anzalone. She added the sax to five of the songs, played by Don Davis. The slower, more sensual "Is You Is My Baby" provides the biggest change of pace and shows off her vocal control and range.

In the Blue Heart Records press release (2/19/21) by Sallie Bengtson, Veronica gives brief descriptions of each song. "You Ain't Unlucky" is a call to action to remain grateful for the good things in your life no matter what happens. "Put Your Wig On Mama" is a song for her mother that is a simmering pot of bumpin' groove gumbo that could be cookin' in any south side Chicago joint. In "Clarksdale Sun," Veronica exclaims "we're gonna' beat down the angry sun with a boogie woogie

bass and drum." (Veronica studied with Victor Wainwright in Clarksdale, MS.)

"Fool Me Twice" is a call to action to not put up with other people's foolishness. In "The Memphis Train," Lewis imagines herself on a symbolic train of dreams and opportunity, riding down to Memphis with no one on board but herself and her piano heroes. "Ode to Jerry Lee" is a fitting instrumental composed in his honor.

Sallie Bengston of NOLA Blue states, "In addition to the 6 stellar original compositions, Veronica offers a total make-over of a Louis Jordan tune in 'Is You Is My Baby?' with a new musical interpretation. She honors one of her heroes, Katie Webster, with a modern spin on 'Whoo Wee Sweet Daddy.'"

The music world has taken notice of Veronica Lewis. <u>You Ain't Unlucky</u> debuted #1 on iTunes, BB Kings Bluesville, and RMR. #2 on billboard, and #4 on North American College & Community Radio Chart.

The awards are coming in at a pace almost as fast as her music. Lewis received the 2021 Blues Blast Music Awards Sean Costello Rising Star, the 2021 Best New Artist Debut, the Boston Music Awards 2020 Blues Artist of the Year and the New England Music Hall of Fame 2021 Best Young Artist Award. She is the also the recipient of the 2019 W.O.W. Rising Star Award and was the 2018 & 2017, 2016 Granite State Blues Challenge Winner.

- Kathryn Gregoire

### Rodd Bland LIVE on Beale Street:

A Tribute to Bobby "Blue" Bland



"Give the drummer some! Drummer and band leader Rodd Bland's late father Bobby "Blue" Bland would be honored by his son's tribute to him, all the more so because of the quality of his





### King Solomon Hicks HARLEM (Provogue/Mascot Label)

Walking into the Briggs Farm Blues Festival in 2019, I had expectations for fantastic music from the artists I knew, and high hopes of discovering something new to whet my musical palette. On a Saturday afternoon, in sweltering heat, in walks King Solomon Hicks to the Back Porch Stage. I was instantly hooked by his charisma, swagger, stage presence, and maturity beyond his years. While this musical appetizer pre-dated his current album Harlem, I knew I was going to follow this young man and his career.

Harlem, released in 2020 from this 24-yearold bluesman, does not disappoint. He is true to the blues form while refraining from half-hearted attempts at redefining it. He isn't concerned with how many notes he can squeeze into a bar (like many others), but instead cultivates beautiful phrases that seem effortless, especially when you see him do it live. The album features 11 songs, nine of which are covers infused with refreshing personal interpretations that might surprise you.

Highlights for me include:

"421 South Main", a roadhouse ready shuffle sure to get people on the dance floor featuring some great interplay between Hicks and Eric Krasno of Soulive and Lettuce fame.

"Love is Alive", a fun funky instrumental featuring saxophonist Ryan Zoidis.

"I Love You More Than You'll Ever Know", a soulful ballad that taps some Wes Montgomery flavor with tasty fuzz textures intermingled.

Clocking in at only 39 minutes, the album is an easy listen from start to finish and will leave you wanting more!

- Dan Mowrey

# Blues Bands Beat

#### by Jack Roberts

It's time for Blues News You Can Use - way past time, some would say - and we've got BIG news for those of you who can't wait to get the blues.

The schedule is out for this year's Lancaster Roots & Blues Fest, and much to our delight, it includes a ton of blues acts from Central PA. Thank you, Rich Ruoff! The event runs for three straight days, Friday, Oct. 15 through Sunday, Oct. 17, at a variety of venues around Lancaster, but that's not what you want to know, is it? No, you want to know which of your buddy's bands are going to be there. And that's what we're here to tell you.

Lancaster-based **Blues on the Loose (BOTL)** will be taking on the crowds at Tellus360's front stage on Saturday evening Oct. 16 at 7:10 for a one-hour show. BOTL has been busy this summer - after a long layoff brought on by the COVID crisis - and has picked up two new, for them at least, Central PA venues: Phantom Power's Beer Garden in Millersville and The Bluebird Inn in Cornwall. In addition, they returned to McCleary's Pub in Marietta in August after a three-year hiatus and will be back there again on Oct. 30.

Even more exciting, though, is that prior to the Roots & Blues Fest, BOTL will be heading back to The Sound Bank in Phoenixville on Oct. 2nd - the place where they beat out five bands from the Philadelphia area to represent the Steel City Blues Society at the 2020 International Blues (Society) Challenge. This time at The Sound Bank, they'll be opening for The Lower Case Blues Band, a tristate favorite for power blues.

As for Lancaster Roots & Blues, BOTL front man/harmonica player Lewis Bechtold noted that it will be their sixth continuous appearance there - provided you count Kevin Gannon's Fill the Void show at Mulberry Arts Studios in Lancaster, which filled in for the Roots & Blues Fest that was canceled in 2020. Fill the Void was a very special show for BOTL as they were just back from the IBC in Memphis.

The gigs just keep coming. "We just booked Dec. 10 at the new Blue Collar Restaurant in Landisville," Bechtold told us in a recent email. More to come? We're waiting to hear!

Also at Lancaster Roots & Blues will be **The Benjamin Vo Band**, and they've got something new, too: a new piano player. "His name is Francois Byers, and we're excited to be playing with him," Vo said in a recent email. As with all stories, there's a backstory. "Francois actually started playing with us last year on March 2020 before the pandemic hit," Vo said. 2020? So what makes him new? "He played one show with us," Vo explained, "and then everything shut down."

But the beat went on. "We reunited this year when things opened up. He's from Winston Salem, North Carolina. He came up to Lancaster while visiting and stayed after he met his future wife, Alexa." And Byers will be playing with the Benjamin Vo Band at 7:10 p.m. Friday Oct. 15 at the Tellus 360 Front stage.

Following up the Benjamin Vo Band on the Tellus360 Front Stage, for Roots & Blues will be **The Mystic Alpacas**. No strangers to Tellus360, the Alpacas, who recently did a Tellus Blues Night there with Blues on the Loose, will be back at again on Nov. 17 which raises the question, "What would Tellus do without these guys?"

The Alpacas also will be back at their other regular haunt, The Bucks Valley Winery in Newport, on Oct. 30. For the record, they just had a once-in-a lifetime gig in Lititz - in front of the Tigers Eye to help the shop celebrate its 25th anniversary. Party on!

Also appearing at Tellus360 for Roots & Blues will be **The Little Buddy Blues Band**, fresh from an August 7th gig at The Bethlehem Musikfest. Now there's a resume item! Little Buddy will be checking in on Sunday Oct 17 at 1 p.m. for an hourlong set on the Front Stage. They'll be playing some songs from their new CD, which includes 12 tunes, 11 of which were written by Little Buddy - aka Mark Kormanik - and one cowritten by Mark and the band's bass player, Anton Marc Clockson. The recording was done at Parallel Studios in Lancaster, with Steve Puffer producing it.

If you like what you hear - and how could you not? - you'll have some chances to hear Little Buddy again soon afterwards: Oct. 18 at the Sellersville Theater, where they'll be playing with Walter Trout - yet another resume item - and closer to home at McCleary's Pub in Marietta on Oct. 23. Can't make it? The band's CDs can be listened to and downloaded at the band's website, www.littlebuddy.rocks. So what are you waiting for?

Did someone say "Little"? Oh, yeah. We did. Well, here's some more "Little" news for you. **The Little Leroys** - aka Cindy Little, Mickey Dean Fisher, Ron Bitler, and Tom Webb - will be taking the Lancaster Roots & Blues stage at Zoetropolis at 5:15 pm on Friday Oct 15. The blues quartet, best known lately for their frequent gigs. But it doesn't end there. They'll also be recording a Christmas CD with Dave Kline - which, we hope, will be out in time for Christmas. For more on The Little Leroys, go to littleleroys.com.

Now for something a little different. While other performers will be playing once at Lancaster Roots & Blues this year, **Bobby Gentilo**, of Right Coast Recording in Columbia, will be performing twice - in two different venues. Why you ask? "I'm releasing my first solo album, <u>Gentilo</u>, all originals tracks released in vinyl and on CDs," Bobby told us in a recent email, "and will be performing the new music at Roots and Blues with two different lineups."

On Friday evening, Bobby's trio, which includes Logan Kurtek on baritone sax and Christy Engel on drums, will be playing at Zoetropolis from 7 to 8:15 p.m. Then on Saturday, his five-piece band, which features Jason Hoffeins on drums, Alex Degnan on bass, Aaron Lewis on harmonica, and Logan Kurtek on baritone sax, will be playing at the Elks Lodge at 11 p.m.

But wait. As usual with Bobby, there's more. On Saturday he'll also be hosting the annual Lancaster Roots & Blues Juke Joint Jam, which he describes as "a chance for musicians from the festival to come together for a late-night Mississippi-style jam." The jam will take place at The Elks Lodge after Bobby's 11 p.m. gig.

Other October gigs for Bobby include October 2nd at Sly Fox Blues & Brew in Pittsburgh and October 9th at the King of Prussia Beerfest in - where else? - King of Prussia. A bit too far to travel? Then catch 'em at Roots & Blues, why don't you? And for still more chances, check out www.bobbygentilo. com.

Award-winning blues legend **Clarence Spady**, who spent some time last month at Right Coast, will be appearing at Lancaster Roots & Blues with his **Electric City Band.** Clarence and his band will be appearing at the Trust Performing Arts Center on Saturday from 9-10:30 p.m.

Spady was at Right Coast recently to record some new tracks in preparation for his next album. While there's no release date yet for it, Spady does hope to have a new Christmas tune released by - you guessed it - Christmas. Sounds like a stocking stuffer to us.

It's been a busy time for Clarence. His recent album, Surrender, is a Billboard Top 10 Album. It hit No. 1 on the Roots Music Report Top 50 Blues Album Chart for two straight weeks in May and came in No. 1 recently on the NACC Blues Chart and No. 2 on both the Australian Blues and Roots Chart and the Collectif des Radios Blues Chart in France. It also was nominated for Contemporary Blues Album in the Blues Blast Music Awards.

Surrender won third place in the 2020 International Songwriting Competition, and the title track and the album won silver medals in the Global Music Awards. More recently, Surrender earned an honorable

mention in the Unsigned Only music competition. Clearly, Clarence and company will have little trouble filling up their 90-minute set.

Then there's **Barrelhouse**, who backed up **Rose Hudson** on the two tunes - "Outside Cat" and "The Blues Will Burn You" - she has on the BSCP CD "Backyard Blues." Both tunes were written by Barrelhouse, who will be taking the Roots and Blues Festival stage at the Imperial Blue Ballroom at the Holiday Inn in Lancaster on Sunday from 1-3 p.m. For more on the band, check out their website at www.thebarrelhousebluesband.rocks And, yes, they do.

Finally, in non-Roots & Blues news, blues diva **Octavia** is on the road again this fall with Sat. Oct 9th at Tellus 360. On Friday, October 15th, she'll be gigging for the first time at Hell in a Bucket Brewing Co. in Wrightsville, starting at 7 p.m. Both gigs will be with her blues duo. Wanna know more? Check out her schedule on her website, octaviablues.com.

Be sure to check out the BSCP website bscpblues.com for current events and gigs in Central PA. Got news for Blues Beats? Feel free to email me at ragtime\_willi@hotmail.com or message me on Facebook.



Jack Roberts, Oct. 17, 2 pm, Front Porch Stage Lancaster Roots and Blues Festival



# BACKYARD BLUES: ON THE AIR

Here is a summary of the Roots Music Reports nationally and in Pennsylvania through July 2021. Note: While no longer charting nationally, <u>Backyard Blues</u> is still going strong in PA, charting #15 for the week of September 5. Thank you, PA DJs! And congratulations to all our wonderful musicians, Right Coast Studio and Blue Heart Records. - Kathryn Gregoire

TOP 50 BLUES ALBUMS (03/06/21 – 05/29/21): #26, #32, #12, #10, #16, #14, #16, #21, #36, #45, (didn't chart), #45, #45, (didn't chart), #45 TOP 50 BLUES SONGS: "BAD INFLUENCE" BLUES ON THE LOOSE (BOTL) #24; "TROUBLE ALL OVER WORLD" BOB WINELAND & HOUSE BAND #30

<u>TOP 50 CONTEMPORARY BLUES ALBUMS</u> (03/06/2 – 07/10/21): #15, #17, #8, #6, #10, #11, #12, #13, #20, #20, #20, #20, #35, #25, (didn't chart), #40, #46, #45

<u>TOP 50 CONTEMPORARY BLUES SONGS:</u> "BAD INFLUENCE" BLUES ON THE LOOSE (BOTL) #13; "LOVE OR MONEY" ROGER HAMMER #37; "TROUBLE ALL OVER WORLD" BOB WINELAND & HOUSE BAND #21

<u>TOP 50 PENNSYLVANIA ALBUMS</u> (03/06/21 – 06/31/21): #2, #3, #2, #1, #3, #3, #2, #4, #5, #10, #5, #5, #10, #6, NO, #11, #12, #14, #14, #14

TOP 50 PENNSYLVANIA SONGS: ALL BACKYARD BLUES SONGS WERE IN TOP 50 PA SONGS AT LEAST ONCE.

PLUS: THE NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY TOP 30 BLUES Weeks ending May 4 and May 18, 2021: #28



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