

TORONTO BLUES SOCIETY MAPLE BLUES

TBS is a charitable organization dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the Blues 

November 2020

www.torontobluessociety.com

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since 1985

info@torontobluessociety.com

Vol 36, No 11



Sugar Brown (aka Ken Kawashima) will discuss "Whose Blues?" with author Adam Gussow November 14, 5pm ET on TBS Facebook Page

MBA Nominees Announced

Whose Blues?

Remembering John Valenteyn

Loose Blues News

Blues Reviews

Blues Events

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TORONTO BLUES SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE TORONTO BLUES SOCIETY ARE ELIGIBLE TO RUN FOR THE 2021 TBS BOARD OF DIRECTORS. IN ORDER TO RUN, YOU MUST BE A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING, AND YOU MUST BE NOMINATED IN WRITING BY THREE VOTING MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY.

NOMINATING DEADLINE IS, DECEMBER 7 BY 5PM.

[INFO@TORONTOBLUESOCIETY.COM](mailto:info@torontobluesociety.com)



Many thanks to Betty Jackson and Geoff Virag for their help at the Toronto Blues Society Talent Search.

Attention TBS Members!

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, TBS is unable to deliver a physical copy of the MapleBlues November issue. However expiring, new & renewing members can expect a letter from us soon. Please e-mail info@torontobluesociety.com if you have any questions and be sure to follow TBS accounts on social media for immediate updates.

The Toronto Blues Society is a member of



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Blues and Anti-Black Racism

The Toronto Blues Society is developing an Action Plan to ensure we address and take measures to prevent any systemic racism. Following consultations with various stakeholders a number of steps have been taken or are in progress including:

- Research grants to support staff and contract consultants.
- Programming of the Pioneer Profiles and other BIPOC artists.
- Consultation with community leadership such as Diana Braithwaite, Anthony Morgan (City of Toronto) and others.
- Recruitment of more broad representation & diversity on the TBS Board of Directors and Music Advisory Council in consultation with community leaders.
- Development of new Strategic Plan for the organization spanning five years and including the broadening of representation & diversity.

[With Permission of the Blues Foundation.] The Blues is an African American art form, originally created as an artistic expression and response to the oppression, dehumanization, and hatred this population had to endure. The Toronto Blues Society stands with the musicians and members of our community past and present who speak truth through music. We will join the greater conversation for the eradication of racism in deference to the legacy of the Blues. "The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice." - Martin Luther King Jr.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Michael Schatte CD Premiere
"Conundrum"

Wednesday, November 4 | 8pm (EST)

Rez Bluez 25th Anniversary live stream with Billy Joe Green on Facebook Live

Friday, November 6 | 8pm (EST)

Michael Jerome Browne MBA Performance on TBS Youtube channel

Wednesday, November 11 | 6pm (EST)

Rez Bluez 25th Anniversary live stream with George Leach on Facebook Live

Friday, November 13 | 8pm (EST)

Adam Gussow on "Whose Blues?" w/ Norman Otis Richmond, Elaine Bomberry, hosted by Sugar Brown

Saturday, November 14 | 5pm

Toronto Blues Society Annual General Meeting

Sunday, December 15 (via Zoom)

Rez Bluez 25th Anniversary live stream with Josh Miller & Pappy Johns on Facebook Live

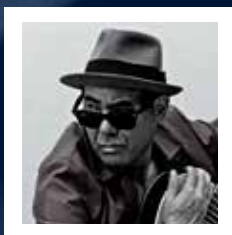
Friday, November 20 | 8pm (EST)



WHOSE BLUES?

AUTHOR ADAM GUSSOW
IN CONVERSATION WITH
SUGAR BROWN

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SAT NOV 14 ° 5PM EST

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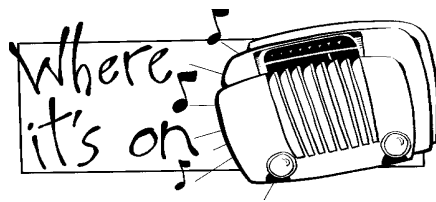
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Saturday Night Blues,
w/ **Holger Petersen** (national)
Saturday 9:05pm-11:00pm
(on Radio 2 Saturday at 6:05pm),



JAZZ-FM (91.1)
Bluz FM w/ **Danny Marks**
Saturday 8:00 pm-midnight



CIUT-FM (89.5)
A to Z Blues w/ **Screamin' Red**
Tuesday 6-7pm
John Valenteyn's Blues
w/ **John Valenteyn**
Friday 1-2pm



At The Crossroads w/ **Brant Zwicker**
<http://atcblues.ca> and syndicated on
stations across the continent)

CKWR (98.5 FM)
Old Chicago Blues w/ **Willy A.**
Saturday 12:30pm - 2:00pm (Kitchener)
www.ckwr.com



CIOI FM (101.5 The HAWK)
Blues Blast, with **Ken Wallis**
Tuesdays, 4-6pm (Hamilton)



COUNTYFM (99.3)
Sideroads with **Blues Sister Peg and
Brotha 'Z'** Tuesday 8-10pm (Picton)



CIWS 102.9FM (WhiStle Radio)
Whistle Bait w/ **Gary Tate**
(aka Shakey-T) Wed, Thurs, Fri 11pm.
(Stouffville)



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CJLX (91.3 FM)
Saturday Night Blues Review, with **George Vaughan**.
Saturday 6-7pm (Belleville)

CFMU (99.3 FM)
Breakfast of Champions, with **Paul Panchezak**. Thurs 10am
Swear to Tell the Truth: the Blues and Rhythm Show, with
C.M.Compton. Tuesday 1-2:30pm (Hamilton)

CFRU (93.3 FM)
The Thrill is Back with **Andy and Andrew** Mondays 1 to 3pm
The Blues Review, with **Roopen Majithia** Tues 9.00 pm (Guelph)

CANOE FM (100.9 FM) canoe.fm.com
Buckslope Blues Cruise with Patrick Monaghan Tues. (7-9pm)
(Haliburton)

CFBU (103.7 FM) *Eclectic Blues* with **Deborah Cartmer**
Tuesday 7-9 pm (St. Catharines)

CKCU(93.1 FM) www.ckcufm.com *Black and Blues* w/ **John
Tackaberry** Every Sunday 9-11 pm (Ottawa)

CKMS (100.3 FM)
Poor Folk Blues w/ **Bruce Hall** (aka Brewski)
Monday 7:30-9 pm (Waterloo)

Jack de Keyzer, JW-Jones and Samantha Martin Lead the Nominations for the 24th Annual Maple Blues Awards

Despite 2020 being the year that really wasn't, the Toronto Blues Society continues to support and promote Canadian Blues artists by announcing the nominees for the upcoming 24th annual Maple Blues Awards. The winners will be announced online from four cities over four nights –February 1, 8, 15, and 22.

Leading the way in nominations is Toronto's Jack de Keyzer, who along with his bandmates garnered seven nominations for Entertainer of the Year, Electric Act of the Year, Male Vocalist of the Year, Recording/Producer of the Year, Guitarist of the Year, Horn Player of the Year (for Richard Thornton) and Bassist of the Year (for Alan Duffy).

Ottawa's JW-Jones and his band(s) are nominated in five categories including Entertainer of the Year, Electric Act of the Year, New Artist of the Year (for Jones' second project HOROJO Trio), Recording/Producer of the Year and Guitarist of the Year. Toronto's Samantha Martin and Delta Sugar have been nominated for four Maple Blues Awards in the categories of Entertainer of the Year, Electric Act of the Year, Female Vocalist of the Year and Drummer of the Year (for Dani Nash). The esteemed Blues Booster of the Year Award winner will be announced at a later date.

"The Pandemic has given us a new reason to feel the blues, but fortunately we will honour the latest body of work and artists with trophies and digital celebrations", says Derek Andrews, President of Toronto Blues Society. "Congratulations to all the nominees."

Toronto Blues Society has been receiving valuable input from the members of the Canadian blues community regarding the Maple Blues Awards procedures and voting, and as such, have been developing new policies and protocol to ensure the Maple Blues Award system is responsive and evolving, thanks to the feedback gathered from across Canada.

While getting nominated for a Maple Blues Award is a wonderful achievement and excitement, not all of the nominees are regular users of social media or some may not have the budgets to execute a successful advertising campaign to solicit votes. In the pursuit of fairness for all of the nominees and transparency, social media advertising by the MBA nominees will now be banned during the public voting period for the 24th annual Maple Blues Awards.

24th Annual Maple Blues Awards Nominees



Entertainer of the Year

Dawn Tyler Watson
Downchild
Jack de Keyzer
JW-Jones
Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar

Electric Act of the Year

Dawn Tyler Watson & Ben Racine Band
Jack de Keyzer
JW-Jones
Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar
Sue Foley

Acoustic Act of the Year

Adam Karch
Harrison Kennedy
Matt Andersen
Michael Jerome Browne
Rick Fines

Male Vocalist of the Year

Chuck Jackson
Harrison Kennedy

Jack de Keyzer
Jim Byrnes
Matt Andersen

Female Vocalist of the Year

Angel Forrest
Crystal Shawanda
Dawn Tyler Watson
Dione Taylor
Samantha Martin

New Artist of the Year

Dione Taylor
HOROJO Trio (Holmes, Rogers, Jones)
Liam Docherty
Matt Weidinger
Smoke Wagon Blues Band

Recording/Producer of the Year

Crystal Shawanda - Church House Blues / True North (Dewayne Strobel)
Durham County Poets - Hand Me Down Blues / Self (Bill Garrett)
Jack de Keyzer - Tribute / Blue Star (Jack de Keyzer)
JW-Jones - Sonic Departures / Solid Blue (Eric Eggleston)
Smoke Wagon Blues Band - Ballad of Albert Johnson / Self (Steve Sherman)

B.B. King International Artist of the Year

Christone "Kingfish" Ingram
Ghost Town Blues Band
Larkin Poe

Rick Estrin & The Nightcats
Victor Wainwright

Songwriter of the Year

Colin Linden
Crystal Shawanda/Dewayne Strobel
Dione Taylor
Kevin Harvey (Durham County Poets)
Paul Reddick

Blues with a Feeling Award (Lifetime Achievement Award)

Alec Fraser
Brent Parkin
Danny Brooks
Joe Murphy
Ken Whiteley
Michael Fonfara
Tom Lavin

Guitarist of the Year

Garrett Mason
Jack de Keyzer
JW-Jones
Sue Foley
Tony D (Monkeyjunk)

Harmonica Player of the Year

Guy Bélanger
Harpdog Brown
Paul Reddick
Roly Platt
Steve Marriner

Piano/Keyboard of the Year

David Vest
Duane Blackburn
Jesse O'Brien
Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne
Michael Kaeshammer

Horn Player of the Year

Jerry Cook (Harpdog Brown)
Mark LeClerc (Fuel Junkie)
Gordon Aeichele (Smoke Wagon Blues Band)
Richard Thornton (Jack de Keyzer Band)
Mat "Moose" Mousseau (Ben Racine Band)

Drummer of the Year

Cory Blackburn
Dani Nash (Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar)
Gary Craig (Colin Linden, Steve Dawson)
Lindsay Beaver
Matt Sobb (Monkeyjunk)

Bassist of the Year

Alan Duffy (Jack de Keyzer)
Alec Fraser
Gary Kendall
John Dymond (Steve Dawson, Big Dave McLean)
Keith Picot

Toronto Blues Society's annual national awards show Maple Blues Awards is going virtual on its next edition from 4 different cities! A bundle of awards will be announced next to some exciting performances from Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver each Monday of February! We are launching with a stream from Toronto on Monday, Feb 1st. Mark your calendar now for Mon, Feb 8, 15, and 22 as well. Online voting is now open until December 1st, 2020 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

VOTE NOW AT MAPLEBLUES.CA

The Toronto Blues Society acknowledges the support of the following funders:

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Tune in to TBS livestream events



Michael Schatte

Michael Schatte CD Premiere "Conundrum"
Wednesday, November 4 | 8pm (EST)

Rez Bluez 25th Anniversary live stream with Billy Joe Green on Facebook Live
Friday, November 6 | 8pm (EST)

Michael Jerome Browne MBA Performance on TBS Youtube channel
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Adam Gussow on "Whose Blues?" w/ Norman Otis Richmond, Elaine Bomberry
hosted by Sugar Brown
Saturday, November 14 | 5pm (EST)

Rez Bluez 25th Anniversary live stream with Josh Miller & Pappy Johns on Facebook Live
Friday, November 20 | 8pm (EST)

Raha Javanfar & Regent Park School of Music Students MBA Performance
Wednesday, December 9 | 6pm on TBS Youtube channel

Maple Blues Band MBA Performance
Wednesday, January 13 | 6pm on TBS Youtube channel

Also, watch for upcoming new events from TBS including: TBS Pioneer Profile Series and new interviews Jay Douglas and others!



Raha Javanfar



Michael Jerome Browne



John Valenteyn: An Old Friend Looks Back

John and I met in 1961, Grade 9 at Port Colborne High School, and were friends since then.

The second time I talked with John in the hospital was on the first day of school, September 8, 2020. This reminded me of our meeting and during the conversation I said, "Do you know it was 59 years ago today that we first met?" John's reply, "Somebody should write that down." Done.

As a result of my friendship with John I attended the Soul and Blues Festival at Harbourfront in 1986, joined the TBS there and have been a member since.

In high school John and I were always more in the Stones camp than the Beatles camp. John bought the *The Rolling Stones. Now!* in early 1965.

The Stones and other blues oriented rock bands got us on the "Blues Trail".

Who were the people credited for writing many songs on these LP's?

Then came *The Paul Butterfield Blues Band* LP in 1965 and *East-West* in 1966! Prior to our trip to Chicago in 2009 I found out that the *East-West* cover photo was taken at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry in Hyde Park. John and I went down, also to check out two record stores, and found the caryatids where the photo was taken 43 years earlier.

By 1966 we were off to university with access to great libraries, book and record stores and we were fully committed to the "Blues Trail" and the "Folk Revival." We were both in science and engineering programs but music dominated our lives.

John got connected with CFRC, the radio station at Queen's University, where he was studying engineering. He decided he was better suited for a career in broadcasting and moved to Ryerson and the Ryerson Radio and Television Arts program.

John was now located in the heart of Toronto's music scene! I have many memories of that time and visiting him to go record shopping and out to see local and international blues, rock, country and new wave bands.

One of his favorite places was the Forbes Tavern. They had blues 45s on the juke box and local blues bands playing there. One of his favorites at the time was Muddy's *Tiger In Your Tank*, the Willie Dixon tune.

When John graduated from Ryerson he started working there for Open College, a radio-based university-credit distance education provider, broadcasting on CJRT. This was his passion and he was very proud of this major part of his life for many years. He recorded and produced lectures and also recorded live music and interviews with contemporary composers. As a result he basically audited all these courses and gained a detailed knowledge of classical music and met many of the performers and composers in contemporary music.

One of his favorite contemporary composers was Elliott Carter. When John and I were in Chicago in 2003 for the blues festival we went to the Symphony Center to hear a preconcert interview with Elliott Carter, 95 at the time, followed by the world premiere of his *Of Rewaking*.

I also remember checking into the hotel in Chicago, for another blues festival, walking down the hall to find our room and hearing a cellist practicing in one of the rooms. John immediately said, "That's Bach's Cello Suite No.1".

cont'd on page 8



*This photo was taken on June 8, 2017 after the Muddy Waters Mural dedication and concert on State Street in Chicago. What is very cool about this is the Rolling Stones logos on the Navy Pier Trolley. The Stones traveling museum show was at Navy Pier that summer. This was pure luck, I did not see the Stones logo until I was reviewing my photos. *Full circle! John is wearing his standard festival attire, T-shirt from a previous festival and red CIUT ball cap. photo by Doug MacVicar*

By the time funding was cut for the Ryerson Programming John was a Senior Producer and had his show *The Blues Hour*, on CJRT. The theme music was instantly recognizable in the first 5 seconds, "Funky London" by Albert King.

When the producer's job came to an abrupt end he was hired at Tower Records, in large part because of his classical music expertise. While working at Tower they learned of his blues experience and that is where *John's Blues Picks* was born.

They designed a large colored graphic, a copy of which was the header for his TBS column of the same name. This was mounted above a browser full of blues CD's selected from the store inventory by John. When Tower closed it took up a place of honor in his music room.

When Tower closed John moved to the Classical department at Sam the Record Man. Soon after he was chosen as head of the Jazz and Blues department. After Sam's closed John moved to HMV, again in the Classical and Jazz department. John retired from HMV before the final clearance sales started. He said he could not stand to see all those empty shelves again!

So how do you sum up a 59 year friendship, 3 trips to Memphis, the Delta and the King

Biscuit Festival in Helena, Arkansas, 19 Chicago Blues Festivals, many other music concerts in Chicago and countless other shared music experiences over the years?

Just like the Rolling Stones/Muddy Waters Mural/John photo, "Sometimes you just get lucky."

I think it is relevant here to acknowledge the contributions, to the music community, of these other Port Colborne High School alumni. They have all been active musicians, influencers and promoters of blues music since the 1960s: Brian Bonnar (d. 2012), Rico Ferrara (Blues for a Big Town) and Rocky Verweel (Rocky and the Buzzards, Cueball, The Buzz).

- Doug MacVicar

Thank you Al Wood, James Doran, June Sommers, Steven Crainford, Myer Siemiatycki, Jon Arnold, Jay Moonah, and Linda Partington for their donations to TBS in memory of John Valentyn. Below are their messages of condolence to the TBS:

Linda Partington: "I appreciate all the work of the TBS in keeping blues music alive. This donation is made in memory of John Valentyn, whose hard work for the TBS, contributions to the newsletter and

enjoyable radio programs demonstrated great knowledge and appreciation of the blues and its musicians. He was a generous, thoroughly decent human being who will be missed by me and many others in the blues community and beyond."

James Doran: "In fond memory of John V. A good man and a great Blues supporter."

Steven Crainford: "In memory of John Valentyn, a lover of the blues and filled with knowledge, esoteric and common of this great musical genre."

Jon Arnold: "In memory of John Valentyn - he will be missed!"

Myer Siemiatycki: "We are sending our deepest condolences at John's passing. We have so many warm, grateful memories of John. He was the sweetest blues fan ever. He was a joy to work with. So talented, always positive, good humoured. Caring. He really lifted my spirits, and his (many) edits always made me sound better and smarter than I was. John was a gem we will always remember. We wish Brenda strength and comfort in the painful path ahead. Hugs, Myer & Gail"

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"Big velvet thunder..."
The convincing ballad Three Words would
make Adele and Etta James cry."
- Brad Wheeler (Maple Blues Newsletter)

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*Samantha Martin
& Delta Sugar*



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Whose Blues?

Starting the Conversation

Adam Gussow was half of the blues duo "Satan and Adam" and teaches at U. of Miss. On Sat. Nov. 14 (5pm on the TBS Facebook page) he will be joined by Sugar Brown, Elaine Bomberry and Norman Otis Richmond to discuss his new book, Whose Blues? Facing Up to Race and the Future of the Music and here's a preview:

Speaking very broadly, people who have emotional investments in the blues — people who like, play, think about, talk about, and identify themselves with the blues — have two diametrically opposed ways of configuring the blues in ideological terms. An ideology is simply an idea-set: an intellectual orientation that governs the way one sees the world and thinks through the problems it presents. One way of ideologizing the blues is to say, "The blues are *black* music." They're a black thing. When you look at the history and cultural origins of the blues, when you look at who has a right to claim the social pain expressed through the blues — what you might call the "I've got the blues" element of the blues — and when you look at who the most powerful performers and great stylistic innovators have been, it's black people who have a profound, undeniable, and inalienable claim on blues in a way that whites just don't. The history, the feelings, the music: they're a black thing. And when whites get involved, as they always do, black people suffer.

This ideological position, a form of black cultural nationalism that I term "black bluesism," is expressed with great clarity and power by Roland L. Freeman, an African American photographer and cultural documentarian, in a poem titled "Don't Forget the Blues." Freeman composed his poem in 1997 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival — the oldest black-run blues festival in the country — and he read it out loud to the crowd. "Do you see 'em," the poem begins, "here they come":

*Easing into our communities
In their big fancy cars,
Looking like alien carpetbaggers*

*Straight from Mars.
They slide in from the East,
North, South and West,
And when they leave, You can bet they've taken
the best.*

Listen to me,

*I've been drunk a long time
And I'm still drinking.
I take a bath every Saturday night,
But I'm still stinking.*

*This world's been whipping me upside my head,
But it hasn't stopped me from thinking.
I know they've been doing anything they choose,
I just want 'em to keep their darn hands off 'a
my blues.*



Musician and professor Adam Gussow is the author of Whose Blues? Facing Up to Race and the Future of the Music, published by The University of North Carolina Press. And for everything you ever needed to know about blues harp, go to www.modernbluesharmonica.com.

That aggrieved "I," demanding our attention, is an avatar of the blues, his blackness unmarked but evident, who refuses to say die: drunk and stinking, beaten down by the world, he is still "thinking," still conscious and resistant. The poem's omnipresent "they" is white people — more specifically, white blues tourists, fans, producers, musicians, anybody who seeks pleasure and profit from the music. "They" is the oppressive white world, an all-points barrage ("from the East / North, South and West") that surrounds, exploits, and unmarks black people ("us") and their ("our") world, body and soul. Playwright August Wilson evokes both worlds in his "Preface to Three Plays" (1991) when he talks about how the blues gave him "a world that contained my image, a world at once rich and varied, marked and marking, brutal and beautiful, and at crucial odds with the larger world that contained it and preyed and pressed it from every conceivable angle."

Like Wilson, Freeman sees the blues as an art form that contains an image of his humanity, but, unlike Wilson, he sees *the blues themselves* as something that the white world has purloined and profited from, an expropriation anticipated by the earlier refashioning of rhythm 'n' blues into rock 'n' roll. "How can we stop 'em," he cries as the poem rolls on, "or will it ever end?":

*Mama's in the kitchen
Humming her mournful song.
Sister's moaning in the bedroom,
Crying some man has done her wrong.
Papa's in the backyard sipping on his corn-n-
n-n . . . liquor, He's just screaming, hollering and
yelling.
And the old folks on the front porch keep saying,
"There just ain't no telling
How long it'll take 'em to leave us alone."
They have taken our blues and gone.*

"Don't Forget the Blues" speaks to the blues from a beleaguered black nationalist perspective. At the heart of the poem is a contemporary black folk community in crisis. There's mama, there's sister, there's papa and the old folks, and there's the poet himself; the family is a microcosm for Black America, and everybody is hurting. Freeman's black family *has* the blues at the very moment when the surrounding white world is consuming and capitalizing on the blues. That white world, these days, is populated by self-styled blues aficionados who claim to love the music and who shout things like, "Keep the blues alive! Let's drive on down to Clarksdale, Mississippi, and listen to the *real* blues at Red's Lounge! Let's pay five thousand dollars and take a blues cruise to the Bahamas! Let's fly our Dutch blues band to Memphis and compete in the International Blues Challenge. Let's go to Adam Gussow's website, Modern Blues Harmonica, and purchase video lessons and

tab sheets so we can learn how to play the blues.” Freeman’s poem articulates the pain created by the juxtaposition of, and the power differential between, two radically different blues worlds: an immiserated but tightly knit black community on the one hand and, on the other, a widely dispersed mainstream blues scene that takes pleasure and profit from the music. When Freeman cries, “There they go, with our gold,” he is, at least implicitly and with prophetic foresight, taking aim at my viewers, my customers, and me — millions of blues harmonica players from 192 countries and territories around the world who enjoy the hundreds of free instructional videos I’ve uploaded to YouTube since 2007, a modest percentage of whom visit my website every year and sometimes buy my stuff.

Freeman’s poem speaks, in other words, to the transformations that mark our contemporary blues moment, even though it was composed in 1997, before the full extent of those transformations had become evident. It evokes the alarm felt by one particular black community advocate at the fact that blues music has moved outward from his community into the larger world, even while black people in those communities are still suffering, still hurting. Black people still *have* the blues. Young black kids may not particularly like or play blues music. But they and the old folks still have the blues. And something vitally important is being lost, Freeman’s poem insists, as blues music floods outward into that surrounding (white) world. Not just lost: something is being taken away from black people in an old, familiar, hurtful way. “I know they’ve been doing anything they choose,” he says repeatedly. “I just want them to keep their darn hands off of *my blues*.”

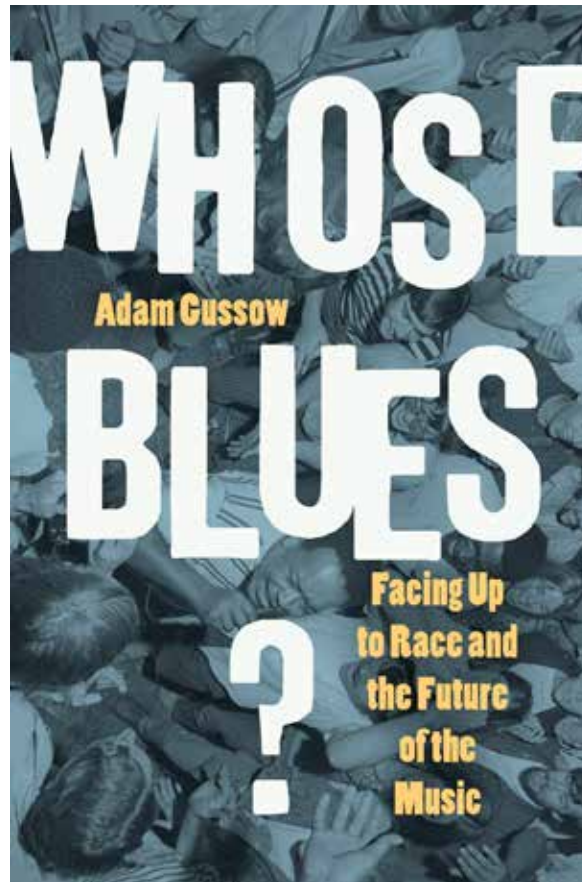
The black bluesist vision certainly has its virtues. But it is confronted, in any case, by a second and diametrically opposed way of ideologizing the blues, one that holds somewhat more sway in our contemporary moment, at least among denizens of the mainstream scene. I’ll call this second orientation “blues universalism.” The epitome of blues universalism is a phrase — a T-shirt meme — that the Mississippi Development Tourism Authority has put up in the waiting rooms of the welcome centers as you enter Mississippi: “No black. No white. Just the blues.”

As problematic as that phrase is, I understand and appreciate the anti-racist message that it believes it is conveying. One nation under the sign of the blues! No segregation, no overt disrespect, no “If you’re black, stay back.” All that race-madness is behind us now. Blues can be a place — or so the slogan suggests — where blacks and

whites and, by implication, a whole bunch of different people, come together. Gay and straight. Men and women. Working-class and middle-class. Americans and foreigners. That’s a good thing, right? Certainly it is a huge improvement over the bad old Mississippi of the Jim Crow era, a place known over the years as “the lynching state” and “the closed society,” where blues was “nigger music” and got no respect whatsoever from white people. Now, an irritable black bluesist might point out that since an overwhelming majority of the greatest Mississippi blues performers, historically speaking, have been African American, and since Mississippi’s contemporary blues tourism industry

to their embrace, so adaptable to infusions of local flavor, even while maintaining its identity as blues? Perhaps the music’s distant African origins offer a clue. Many enslaved Africans in the antebellum South, especially in Louisiana, were brought from Senegal and Gambia. One thing that made that part of West Africa distinctive was the trade routes: a lot of Arab traders coming through, bringing along their Islamic religion and its melismatic vocal music. Melisma is a vocal technique that takes one word or cry and runs it through a long series of pitches; it often takes the form of what ethnomusicologists call a “descending vocal strain.” Melismatic singing — also known as “riffing” in black cultural contexts — lies at the heart of the blues tradition, and black popular and religious music more generally. Field hollers are melismatic. B. B. King is a wonderfully evocative blues singer because he brought gospel melisma into the blues. In other words, one core element of the blues isn’t African per se but Arabic: this is the argument made by German ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik in *Africa and the Blues* (1999). Senegalese musical culture made a space for Islamic melisma, absorbing and transforming that influence even while maintaining its core values. People who live on trade routes need to be quick on their feet, culturally speaking: taking what they like and mixing it into the local stew, even while maintaining that stew’s brand identity. Senegalese culture, in turn, became the generative matrix of blues culture after the crucible of slavery brought Senegalese musicians to the southern United States.

One way of appreciating why Freeman might have felt the need to write his angry poem is to engage in a thought experiment that I call flipping the script. What would the present situation involving whites, blacks, and the blues look like if we picked a “white” folk music—bluegrass, say, rather than blues — and flip-flopped the races, so that blacks, suddenly an overwhelming numerical majority, were the larger world, in August Wilson’s terms, that preyed and pressed on a beleaguered “white” folk-musical community from every conceivable angle? What would that situation look like? It’s a fanciful scenario, one that traffics in stereotypes and exaggerations in order to make a point, but I’d like to play it out, much the way that African American author George Schuyler envisioned the chaos wrought on America by a drug that could turn black people white overnight in his satirical novel, *Black No More* (1931).



is anchored in the reputations of those celebrated performers, there’s something disingenuous about welcoming blues tourists to your state with a slogan like “No black. No white. Just the blues.” Doesn’t that formulation tend to underplay the hugely disproportionate black contribution to the blues—the very reason, in fact, why so many white blues tourists flock to Mississippi in the first place? Wouldn’t a phrase like “Welcome, white blues tourist, to the home of real black blues” be more accurate? But at least the welcome mat has been thrown out, and at least Mississippi’s blues are being celebrated in Mississippi. That’s a good thing, isn’t it?

Why do so many different kinds of people around the world not only listen to blues but sing and play the music? Why is it so receptive

cont’d on page 12

Imagine that you've got not just black Americans but also musicians and fans from all parts of Africa, trekking up to the mountains of Kentucky, wanting to hang out with bluegrass banjoist Ralph Stanley, Man of Constant Sorrow. This isn't Jon Spencer and a bunch of white punk rockers hanging out with bluesman R. L. Burnside in Mississippi, this is Jamal and Dewayne and Ibrahima heading up into the hills and hollers to hang out with Ralph — and Imani and Jada, too, all of them wanting to party with, and document, the mountain man. Imagine that over a fifty-year period, the situation had evolved from a few black folklorists and fans tracking down Ralph, Bill Monroe, and Flatt & Scruggs, to a situation in which hundreds of thousands of black kids are buying banjos, guitars, fiddles, and learning how to play bluegrass, to a point where now, at this late moment, black people actually have a monopoly, or near monopoly, on the means of production. The record labels — Motown and Boogie Down Productions — are up in the hills. They're doing field recordings of Ralph Stanley and his family, and the hard-core black bluegrass aficionados are publishing a magazine called *Keeping the Mountains Real*. It's the analogue to *Living Blues*, but instead of being written and published by whites, with lots of blues album reviews by white reviewers, it's written and published by an all-black staff, with lots

of bluegrass reviews by black reviewers. *Keeping the Mountains Real* has a certain number of white subscribers; a handful of them even come from the Kentucky hills. But most subscribers are black urbanites, and, as aficionados, they engage in fierce debates about the music they love. Some of them, the "purists," argue that black bluegrass players just can't sing bluegrass with an authentic twang; this invariably produces cries of outrage from another cohort of black bluegrass lovers and performers who insist that it's not about color, it's about the high lonesome feeling in your heart. They've got a slogan: "No white or black, just some bomb-ass 'grass."

The contemporary situation of the blues, as evoked by Freeman, is sort of like that. Of course this little thought experiment has an element of fun-house exaggeration, but only enough to make a point: something weird and unsettling has happened to the blues — at least when viewed from a certain kind of skeptical black community perspective.

I've already suggested a way I find myself, as purveyor of a popular blues harmonica instructional website, ethically implicated in the present discussion. But I'm interested in having the conversation for a different reason: as the interracial married father of a black/biracial son, I dwell in a family circle where there is no racial "they." There is only "we." At the age of thirteen, Shaun's musical

talents have already made themselves vividly obvious — he plays trumpet and half a dozen other instruments — and I've taught him the rudiments of blues tonality, along with the heads for "Watermelon Man" and "Doozy." At some point in the future, if he realizes his promise, it is entirely possible that he will be able to tell an interviewer that he learned to play the blues from an old white man down in Mississippi. The marvelous absurdity of that statement makes me want to think these issues through. If I'm a member of a troubled, unsettled blues community — a white-and-black community, a world community — I want to understand where we are as a community. I don't see Freeman, with his black nationalist perspective, as a "they" who is stirring up trouble but as a member of my extended family, as it were, who is doing his best to speak the truth as he sees it. If there's no black and no white, just the blues, then I want to understand where we, as blues people, really are at this moment in history.

- Adam Gussow

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Webinars from Folk Alliance: The Folk Alliance has been presenting regular instructional webinars and “virtual gatherings” to help us get through this disruption. On Thursday November 12, it’s “The Future is Green - Envisioning and Enacting a Sustainable Music Industry” to reconsider and reorient our activities towards greater sustainability and greener practices. Join a group of expert panelists leading the shift as they discuss their accomplishments to date and the projects they’ve been pursuing through the pandemic. The Canadian contingent of panelists will include Marie Zimmerman from Guelph’s Hillside Festival and Candice Tulsieram, The Sustainable Events Forum, Canada. Moderator is Alysha Brilla. On Tuesday, November 10, there will be a “virtual gathering” of roots music agents to connect with other booking agents facing the pandemic related upheavals of 2020 with the specific intention of cultivating community and decreasing isolation during this unprecedented and challenging time. This 60-minute session is exclusively for agents. More info at www.folk.org/webinars

New Music Officer at OAC: The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) announced that Dwayne Dixon has joined OAC as Interim Music Officer. “It gives me great pleasure to welcome Dwayne as our Interim Music Officer,” said Carolyn Vesely, CEO. “His deep knowledge of urban music, his professional background as an artist and a producer, as well as his leadership experience in arts administration give him tremendous perspective in this role. Dwayne will work closely with long-serving Music Officer David Parsons and program administrators Jenny Knox and Rachel Mutombo to guide applicants through OAC’s music programs.”

Dwayne has more than 15 years of experience in the arts as well as in the corporate and entertainment sectors. In

2016-17, he was Executive Director of the Nia Centre for the Arts, a youth arts organization focused on helping young Black artists. Dwayne also produced Nia’s first large-scale multidisciplinary arts festival, Blowout Fest. From 2013 to 2015, Dwayne was the Executive Director of Manifesto Community Projects, where among his achievements he produced Canada’s largest hip-hop and urban arts festival at Yonge & Dundas Square in Toronto.

In 2004, Dwayne established an urban artist showcase called Follow Your Instinct (FYI) to create opportunities for aspiring performing artists and over the years, FYI Kids has worked with more than 3,000 children in tandem with the Canadian National Institute For The Blind (CNIB), the Toronto Symphony

Orchestra (TSO), the Toronto Centre For The Arts, the Chinese Moon Festival celebrations and the Ontario Science Centre.

Dwayne’s varied career has seen him produce, host and program radio shows. He has emceed events and has recorded as a hip-hop artist. He has had gigs in the corporate world, most recently as a capabilities coach for TD Bank. He has served on the board of directors of Urban Music Association of Canada (UMAC) and RISE Edutainment and as a program committee member for Prologue Performing Arts.

In 2017, Dwayne was the recipient of the Afroglobal Television Excellence Award for Heritage.

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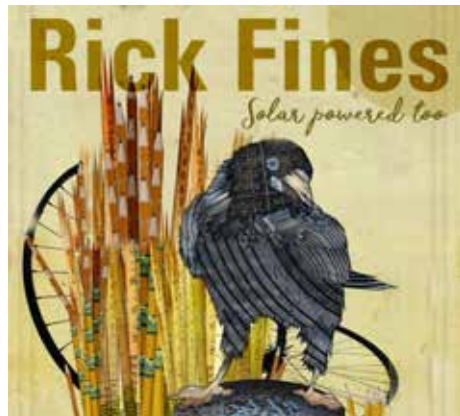


Illustration by Nathaniel Mesner



Jack de Keyzer Tribute (Blue Star Records / jackdekeyzer.com)

Born in London, UK and carrying a Dutch family name Jack de Keyzer is now one of the pillars of Canada's blues community. Long gone are the apprenticing days with Ronnie Hawkins or rabble rousing with the Bobcats, Jack de Keyzer has evolved into a master musician, a teacher who enjoys his job and loves to shine light on his inspirations. *Tribute's* spotlight is directed at great blues, soul, funk and rock grooves of the sixties and all decades since, spanning Jack's healthy career hitting hundreds of stages across Southern Ontario and way beyond. Scott Biersack's hippie retro artwork is a bit of a giveaway, but you don't need a crystal ball to see where Jack is going to take you. Spoiler alert, by my ears, Jack has been inspired by no less than Otis Rush, Robert Johnson, Hubert Sumlin, BB King, Eric Clapton, Steve Cropper, Carlos Santana, James Brown, meant in the most positive of ways... "what could go wrong?" Motown, Chess, Stax, the man has had *his* ears open and to borrow Malcolm Gladwell's notion, put his "ten thousand hours" in a long time ago. A taste of Wes Montgomery jazz and some scratch reggae guitar riffs? Variety is the spice of Jack's life. This release is a trademark honest and natural classic, straight up, inspired and true. If you are already a fan, you'll welcome the piercing electric guitar up front and the snug as a bug in a rug back-up driving his steady crew of players (Al Duffy, Richard Thornton, Nick Succi, Peter Grimmer). For those just discovering Jack, hang on for a little whiplash in the note bending department and some passionate and at times seductive Canadian blues rock. (Derek Andrews)



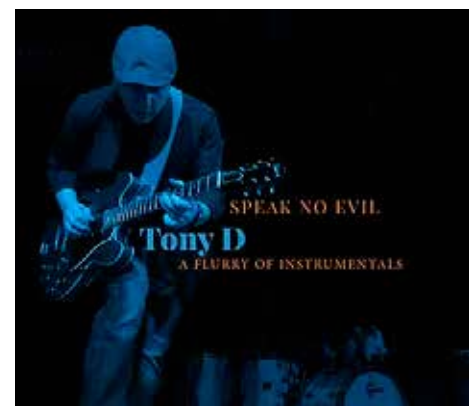
Rick Fines Solar powered too (Independent / rickfines.ca)

Time has been good to Rick Fines – as this tasty release attests. His smooth, whiskey-poured-over gravel vocals have aged beautifully, adding gravitas to his every lyric. This – his second release recorded (mostly) using the power of the sun from his northern hideaway – is a hearty collection of rootsy folk and blues, featuring eleven originals (some cowrites with Matt Andersen, Grainne Ryan, P.J.Thomas) and a Jesse Winchester cover. His national popularity as a much-loved troubadour and perpetually smiling face translates to the music he creates – the warmth he generates surely accentuated here by the sun's heat. Rick is as much folk as he is blues, yet he refuses to be corralled by limitations and it shows in his writing. His guitar-playing, too, has become as powerful as his voice – favouring National steel here – his fingerstyle work, sure and powerfully-stated. For voice alone, the opening "Below The Surface" is a clock-stopper, as he observes the general mood of the country, whether intended or not, his baritone guitar ringing with truth. For a deep blues take, "Worry Be The Death Of Me" – as lovely a marriage of Roly Platt's sensational harp to Fines' 'solo bluesman' and dangerously-slippery National Steel slide, replete with responsible social commentary. Or savour an even more shadowy blues detour with Platt and Fines' own "Dark Days". However, it's his original "Laundry on the Line" that sticks out like a broken marriage. Life as a struggle and continuous uphill battle benefits greatly from his gentle vocal touch and still-stinging guitar. Jimmy Bowskill's mandola drives Winchester's magical "That's What Makes You Strong" as guest Melissa Payne and Fines' vocals combine to celebrate the ultimate upbeat singalong classic. Parties are fueled by no less than Alec Fraser's Cigar Box bass on the kitchen-busting "Live Forever", which reveals Fines' chameleonic nature as the focal point of most festivities, milking his natural drawl – an instrument unto itself. Another stand-out, the slinky, barrelhouse

feel of "You Only Want Me When You Need Me" – co-written with Matt Andersen – benefits from Rob Phillips rollicking piano, Gary Craig's fat, percussive sound and strong backup vocals. The fun, fiddle-and-mandolin-fired Cajun stomp of "Yellow Moon, Indigo Sky" adds head-turning guitar and the simpatico vocals of co-writer Grainne Ryan, underlining Fines' inability to be a pony with just one trick. Bowskill's pedal steel adds intimacy to "One More Loon" while "Scared To Death" is emblematic of Fines' effectiveness as a one-man-music-machine – singer and slide guitarist, doing what he does best. All this while saving the planet at the same time? Doubly impressive. (Eric Thom)

Tony D Speak No Evil: A Flurry of Instrumentals (Independent / tonyguitarro.com)

Such a great idea for Tony D to reveal himself as much more than a primate with the release of this multi-hued retrospective, displaying his passion and abilities across



all styles of guitar. First enamoured of Tony Diteodoro's many talents with his solo releases from back in '93 and '94, he was then – as he is now – a musical adventurer. His early blues output leaned towards the Hendrix/SRV side of the tracks. Yet, this disc clearly reveals talents above and beyond this stereotype over the past 20 years, revealing a softer side demonstrating both accelerated guitar skills, having taken to heart the influences of such diverse players as Django Reinhardt, Paco de Lucia, Charlie Byrd and even Andrés Segovia. Who knew? Those looking for their blues fix will love the slowed-down, uptown groove of "Fat City Blues", featuring an old-school guitar-sax duel with Zeek Gross. For the blues rockers, "Amigo's Fandango", "Blues Party" and the slow, slippery "Turn Out The Lights" will satisfy while the only 'new' track – the co-written "'70's Big Muff" – namechecks Hendrix and SRV complete with a Joe Walsh drive-by. This is what wah-wah pedals were made for. Yet, in full blues

furor, Mr. D switches gears with the delicate, flamenco-flavoured “Blue Gypsy” from his days in the James Cohen Caravan. This lovely melody is immersed in colourful, acoustic fingerstyle guitar, piano and accordion (Richard Bell) and added guitar from Cohen, from back in '03. If that doesn't give your head a shake, delight in the similarly exotic “Argentinean Surf Tango” – and if a title could tell it all, this comes close – same time, same players. Who knew that Ottawa had its own Hot Club?

“See Me Thru” skirts jazz in a flamenco vein while “Little Saint” takes D’s guitar more toward classical guitar, as James Cohen adds rhythm. You’ll run looking for a rose to put in your teeth. A lovely surprise is found in the offbeat “Swank” – a ‘70’s soul, funk and rock concoction featuring killer organ/baritone guitar and drums by Monkeyjunk alumnae Steve Marriner and Matt Sobb, co-writers. A barnburner unto itself, Tony brings it down with an acoustic rendition of “Argentinean Surf Tango”, featuring guest guitar from James Cohen and bittersweet accordion from the late Richard Bell.

With special thanks for the Tom Snyder throwback, *Speak No Evil* is a compulsory revelation that any self-respecting guitar fan must own – especially in light of the unavailability of most of these earlier recordings. An eye-opening release from one of Canada’s best players. (Eric Thom)

Ronnie Earl & the Broadcasters *Rise Up* (Stony Plain Records)

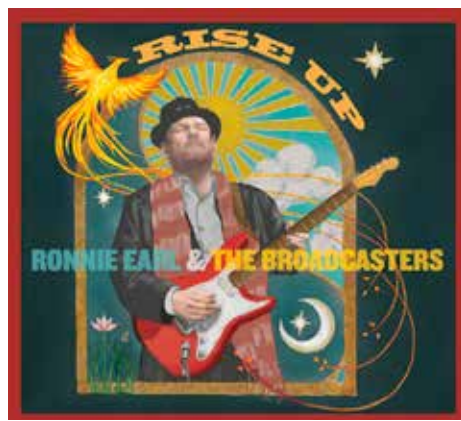
Guitar giant Ronnie Earl adds to his impressive catalogue of recordings with his latest release, *Rise Up*, on Stony Plain Records.

This 15 song album showcases the artist’s masterful guitar work with a socially conscious recording.

As ever, Earl is understated in both his performances and his renderings of songs composed by an array of artists including Magic Sam, Bob Dylan, Lillian Green and Fenton Robinson, along with his own material filling out the album.

Partially recorded live from Daryl’s House Club and partially recorded in his home as part of The Living Room Sessions, this album is contextual in nature, with songs dedicated to George Floyd, Lucky Peterson, Jimmy Smith, and addicts and alcoholics everywhere (Earl speaks freely of his over 30 years of sobriety).

Starting off with the traditional song “I Shall Not Be Moved,” arranged by Ronnie Earl for a spare and clean take, the album kicks off a journey of memories, soft pedaled social statements and Earl’s



passionate performances. “Blues For George Floyd,” gives a voice to the injustice and pain of Floyd’s senseless murder. In a song co-written with vocalist Diane Blue, “Black Lives Matter,” Earl speaks of those remembered while Blue delivers a heart wrenching vocal. “You Don’t Know What Love Is,” is a funky version brought to life by Diane Blue’s vocal prowess, while Big Town Playboy features a B3 solo through this beefy shuffle. Ertegun’s “Mess Around,” brings a bouncy, effervescent approach with its piano based boogie, “All Your Love,” showcasing a powerful vocal performance by Blue, while “Blues for J,” is a lively jazzy take on this Jimmy Smith composition that swings hard and features Dave Limina’s B3 work. Through it all, Earl’s guitar is the lifeblood, soaring through the veins of the music to beat the heart of this vital recording.

Overall this is another fine release by one of the most versatile guitarists on the Blues scene today. One can count on Ronnie Earl to deliver passionate, honest music that pushes the boundaries of what can often be claimed as blues. (Cindy McLeod).

Duke Robillard *Blues Bash* (Stony Plain)

Although a house party is not in the cards right now, Duke Robillard’s Stony Plain release *Blues Bash!* is the next best thing. Robillard, the Grammy-nominated, co-founder of Roomful of Blues, has been at the blues game for more than fifty years, and his wide-ranging experience is on full display in this CD. His bandmates here are Bruce Bears on piano and Hammond organ, drummer Mark Teixeira, and bassists Jesse Williams and Marty Ballou. Accompanying these musicians are a slew of Duke’s friends, adding up to a full, rich band sound with plenty of dynamic horns.

Recorded over a two-day session just as the pandemic hit North America, *Blues Bash!* is the perfect antidote for the tedium of covid. It’s a showcase for Duke’s superlative Strat playing and expressive vocals. So even if you’re holed up alone, lace up your dancing shoes and get ready to boogie!

The CD lifts you off the sofa with Ike Turner’s rollicking “Do You Mean It,” featuring suave vocals by Chris Cote and Robillard’s scorching guitar above lively horns and a driving bass line. Then Duke sings his own lusty blues composition “No Time,” backed by Mark Hummel’s stellar harmonica. In “What Can I Do,” a hand-clapping swing number, piano, sax and guitar swap exuberant solos.

The tempo slows with “Everybody Ain’t Your Friend” even as the intensity burns with Robillard’s robust vocals and his exceptional guitar work. In “Rock Alley,” an instrumental shuffle, Duke’s guitar trades solos with the sax in a virtuoso performance. For a change of pace, Michelle “Evil Gal” Willson sings



the cheeky “You Played on My Piano,” her seductive voice accompanied by silky guitar and saxophone.

The band rocks out in Dave Bartholomew’s 1950 tune “I Ain’t Gonna Do It,” with some standout piano by Mark Braun, and Robillard reprises T-Bone Walker’s recording of “You Don’t Know What You’re Doin’,” with Chris Cote back on vocals fronting some rousing horns. Duke pulls you up on the dance floor in his self-penned number “Give Me All the Love You Got.” Then like a full-bodied, luscious nightcap, “Just Chillin’” closes *Blues Bash!* with a smooth and seductive jazz groove, featuring outstanding acoustic bass, sax and guitar — a most satisfying finale for a highly enjoyable recording. (Sandra B. Tooze)

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

As the MapleBlues team adjusts to the loss of our esteemed reviewer, JV, it is important that blues artists and their labels make sure that TBS is getting your new release in good time so that it can be assigned to one of the pool of knowledgeable blues influencers who we will call upon for reviews. Thanks this month to Eric Thom, Cindy McLeod, Sandra B. Tooze and TBS Prez Derek Andrews.

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Maple Blues Awards Going Virtual in 2021

The 24th Annual Maple Blues Awards is going virtual on its next edition which will take place in February, 2021. The Board of Directors of TBS has been faced with the difficult decision considering the ongoing global pandemic. Public voting in eligible categories is taking place during the month of November 2020 and the winners will be announced during the online awards show.

Derek Andrews, president of Toronto Blues Society said, "The uncertainty of live music events has forced us to err on the side of caution by celebrating the best in Canada's blues virtually, with no boundaries worldwide!"

In addition, the tenth biennial Blues Summit conference and showcase was to be held January 29th – February 1st, 2021 but the decision has been made to move the event to 2022. Details to follow.

Online voting is open from November 2nd, 2020 at 12:01 am Eastern Time, through December 1st, 2020 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

www.mapleblues.ca

Zoe Chilco remembered as a spark ahead of her time

As she remembers her friend, Zoe Chilco, Cheryl Bathe recalls a time when Zoe held a dinner party for her friends, many years ago. Surrounded by Zoe's collection of unique finds, the conversation turned amongst her friends to what one thing they would want of hers, when she one day passed on.

"Zoe was kind of eccentric with what she collected and what interested her," said Bathe. The one thing Bathe wanted were old books Zoe had in her bathroom, a Flower Fairies collection filled with little poems.

On one of the last visits the two friends shared, Zoe gifted Bathe with the books.

"Didn't she give me the little Flower Fairy book, when I went down to see her?" remarked Bathe. "She remembered. I bet it was 20 years ago."

The story speaks to Zoe's unique look at life, her attention to detail and her insight into and care for others and is one of many shared after her death at age 75 this month, her family and friends speaking to her energy, her zest for life and her spark, in her memory.

Zoe grew up in a little bungalow in Scarborough, one of eight kids. Her son Chris was born when she was 23.

"Neither of my parents have ever gotten married. When she found out she was pregnant she just checked in with my dad, if he wanted to be part of raising me, but they were very young," said Chris. "She was 23, he was 26, I was an unplanned pregnancy, so she decided to raise me on her own."

Life with his mom, just the two of them, "was a good thing," said Chris. And then, with a laugh: "In a weird way I always felt like she did an excellent job, and I ended up pretty well-balanced, considering."

The two lived in Cabbagetown, and later in Parkdale, living at times technically under the poverty line but, in Chris's memory, without a want.

"I didn't have any brothers or sisters, it was just us, so we were definitely like a team," he said.

His mom was fun-loving, open to acting like a kid, Chris said. She discouraged television, and encouraged reading and use of the imagination.

Bathe remembers that, too. When Zoe



Ah, hayell, folks,

'tweren't nuthin'....

but it sho' was fun!

Zoe Chilco, a long time TBS member and volunteer as well as singer/songwriter, radio host and writer, died on October 6, age 75, of cancer. Zoe performed and recorded jazz and blues, standards, and originals, releasing nine albums and a music/narrative show Zootcase, a loving tribute to the great Zoot Sims featuring songs she wrote in homage to him. She was a finalist in the 2002 UK Songwriting Contest and was voted one of the top ten listeners' choices for Blues Radio Germany.

first visited her home after they became friends in the late '80s, Bathe's kids were in the living room.

"She immediately came in and sat down with them on the floor and started playing whatever board game they were playing, with them," said Bathe. "When she left, they came to me very confused and said, is she a kid, or an adult? They had never met anybody like her ... She didn't have rules, she didn't have rules like other people lay down for themselves about what you have to do as an adult."

Zoe had interests in social justice, health and environmentalism before those topics mattered to most people.

"She was always ahead of her time in terms of all the things that people are talking about now," said Chris. "Health food, climate change, mistrust of corporations, women's issues, she was definitely a feminist, she wore radical clothes." Zoe's alternative lifestyle wasn't always comfortable for Chris as he was growing up – over time he has come to see her as a visionary.

"But all of that stuff, I've seen it come around, now they're all issues of the day and her independence is amazing to me now," he said. "All of the stuff that she was consumed with back then, when it was very frowned upon to even bring up things like that, it's all ended up being true: pollution, climate change, all of that stuff, she was on it back then when it wasn't fashionable to talk about, and spent the last 30 years just watching one by one all of those issues come to the fore, and it's pretty amazing."

Zoe spent time as a French teacher – outwitting kids who had planned not to learn in class with the supply teacher that day – and as a massage therapist, sometimes practicing in homes before that was more

common. She studied languages – including Latin, Gaelic, French, Italian, Spanish – doing so before travelling to places, in any way she could even on a meagre budget, where she might be able to use them.

"She was able to do it because that's what she wanted to do," said Bathe. "Her energy, her drive, she didn't let things stop her. She found a way."

"She worked to live as opposed to lived to work," said Chris. "In the end she had two houses, she travelled the world, and she continued with that pace ... So in the end she had way more free time to do what she wanted to do, which I think, again, I've come around, that's the way to do it, if you ask me. Especially after COVID, again, people are coming around to her way of thinking. She was just very ahead of her time."

In the late '80s, Zoe moved to Haliburton County – "she followed someone who she cared about," said Chris – buying 100 acres in Carnarvon and putting in a Pan-Abode cottage. She lived here, spending time at apartments she had in Toronto until she bought a house in Scarborough in 2008, then living here or there between 2008 and 2016. Chris bought the cottage from her a few years ago, while Zoe bought a little place elsewhere in Algonquin Highlands, across the road from the lake.

After landing here, Zoe was instrumental in founding the original women's shelter in Haliburton County, steadfastly holding fundraisers, including the Thalia's Voice concert held at Beaver Theatre, and working as part of the HERS (Haliburton Emergency Rural Shelter) Committee – not just in the '90s, but in more recent years too, to keep the local shelter now in place funded.

cont'd on page 18

"She was really a sparking kind of person," said friend Heather Ross. "A lot came off of her energy. She didn't back down and she grabbed things, she really was pretty fearless."

While music was always a part of her life, it wasn't until her 50s that Zoe really began to pursue it as a career.

One day while Zoe was at another musician's gig in Toronto, he noticed she was writing out lyrics to her most recent song on a paper placemat, according to an interview she had with Mike Jaycock on CanoeFM late last year. The musician invited her to the stage, as he was prone to do.

"I had this paper placemat in my hand, and these guys of course are all professionals, they just start playing it, taking off with it," she said. "I'm up there singing, looked down, one way to my right, one way to my left, and I thought, oh my God, this is incredible, this has got to be the best night of my life. And you know what, it has stuck with me as that because it was so gratifying to have these amazing musicians playing this piece of music that I had just written, many were just sliding with it, and it was the greatest high. It really was incredible. Even though I wasn't doing all of the performing I ended up doing later, that had to be the biggest stand-out for me."

Later when she was at the Minden Fair, she told Jaycock, "by that time I was a little nervier," and she asked the band if she could play a song. Someone in the audience told her there was a guy in town looking for a singer, and that guy turned out to be Gord Kidd, who she sang with for almost six years.

"And that was the beginning of my musical career," she said.

Over time, Zoe would release 10 professional albums, all originals, her work also available on streaming services under her name. She performed jazz and blues concerts at cafes and restaurants, in Whitby and in Mexico, at Hugh's Room and the Old Mill Toronto, and also locally at Music by the Gull, the Minden Hills Cultural Centre and for events in Head Lake Park. She hosted two radio shows on Canoe FM – The Blue Canoe for eight years, and Zoe's Haphazard Saturday Nights for seven.

"I just have to sing, every day, because that is what always frees me from the madding crowd, and it's what inspires me, and makes me feel good, better, and best," she wrote on her blog in 2019. "So I will keep on singing."

Zoe was also a writer, telling Jaycock that at one point she had a mountain of

notebooks that went back to the '60s.

"I've been writing for a long time, didn't realize how much stuff I had until I started organizing," she said.

Blog posts offering details into her life, her experiences and her frustration with illness, and essays available on WattPad share insights into her philosophy and experiences. A novella she wrote, *Wind Dancing*, became a podcast, documenting her creativity across paper and technology and showcasing the energy she had for creating, and living, even when she began feeling unwell.

"She realized that there was so much she wanted to get done and I think it helped normalize things," said Chris. "I would have a busy day, she would have a busy day, it's not like she was just sitting there staring at the wall. Both of us were kind of feeling the same way in terms of what we accomplished that day. You don't have to push yourself at this point, you can just relax, but I think it made her feel less sick ... She kept on doing it. She could have used another 20 years obviously."

Though she always took care of herself, Zoe had let some check-ups lapse, and so when she was finally urged by a friend to see a doctor about some changes to her body, her family doctor pursued it urgently. Zoe was diagnosed with Stage 4 ovarian cancer. She underwent chemotherapy and immunotherapy for many months.

"It's a weird feeling," said Chris. "You're so used to doctors having a what's next kind of thing, and then we got to that point where they were like, there is no next step, it's cancer, that's it, there is no cure. Those were moments that we shared together that were kind of like, holy shit, this is for real."

Zoe decided to get off of chemo, Chris said, because she just wanted to face it naturally. She lived another six months after that.

"Obviously in the last couple of years, especially since the diagnosis, which was 18 months ago, we had a lot of time – thankfully – to just basically take advantage of all that time we had, whatever time we had left," said Chris. "We spent time together obviously going to the hospital and all that stuff, and going through that whole cancer journey thing with chemo and all that. But then we would just talk on the phone every night, which was really great, because they were good conversations. She kept up on current events voraciously, she would always listen to the news, listen to what was happening, so

we could talk about anything. And then she always had an interest in what I was doing, which was nice to have."

"We did get down to see her a few times, recently," said Bathe. "It was nice to be able to go and have her be the same. Even though you knew she was dying, she was the same, it was amazing. You felt like it was the same old Zoe, other than her low lack of energy, she still had that spark, it was quite amazing. And she was just as interesting, or even more so."

For the most part, Zoe's experience of cancer was fairly discomfort-free, said Chris, but eventually she knew the growth would cause her to become incapacitated.

"She received world-class treatment at Princess Margaret Hospital for ovarian cancer and, as it worsened, chose to end her journey the way she lived it: on her own terms," reads her obituary. Zoe died peacefully at home by way of a medically-assisted death on Oct. 6.

"At the last moment, she realized what was happening and she was trying to control it," said Chris, with a gentle laugh, remembering his mom's everlasting command of her own life. "She was playing the song, *Into the Mystic* by Van Morrison, and she said, OK, you can open up the IV drip at precisely this time, she was band leading right up until the end."

Family joined Zoe by her side and neighbours gathered on the street.

"There was laughter, there was tears, we toasted her with champagne, and then ... we showed her video of the people out on the street, so she was really happy about that."

Everyone else said goodbye, and then it was just Zoe and Chris.

"And then ..." he takes a moment, pausing, composing himself, and then names her favourite beach, on Twelve Mile Lake, across from Twelve Mile Lake United Church Cemetery, her final resting place. "It's ideal. It brought her great comfort that she was going to go there ... So she called that up in her mind, and then gave the go ahead."

Zoe's obituary notes that she "lived life to the fullest, inspiring others to do the same." Her story, it reads, is of a "powerful, creative force who fought for justice and equity, was loved and loved fiercely, and will be missed deeply by all lucky enough to know her." It's the story her friends and family think on now as they carry on after saying goodbye.

"It's a good one," says Chris.

- Sue Tiffin (*reprinted from Minden Times*)

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Twitter: @bhwheerglobe

- Bette Smith** *The Good, The Bad and The Bette Ruf*
- ***Miss Emily** *Live at the Isabel* Independent
- ***Tony D** *Speak No Evil A Flurry of Instrumentals* Self
- Songhoy Blues** *Optimisme* Fat Possum
- ***Endrick and the Sandwiches** *Green Room Rumble* Self
- Shirley King** *Blues for a King* Cleopatra
- Rev. John Wilkins** *Trouble Goner* Records
- ***Rick Fines** *Solar Powered Too* Raf
- New Moon Jelly Roll Freedom Rockers** *Volume 1* Stony Plain
- ***Bill Bourne** *A Love Fandango* Twelve Point Records
- Shemekia Copeland** *Uncivil War* Alligator
- Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters** *Rise Up* Stony Plain
- ***Dione Taylor** *Spirits in the Water* Matay
- Joe Louis Walker** *Blues Comin' On* Cleopatra
- ***Downchild** *Live at the Toronto Jazz Festival* Linus
- ***David Rotundo** *So Much Trouble* Lee Oskar
- ***JW-Jones** *Sonic Departures* Solid Blue
- Duke Robillard** *Blues Bash* Stony Plain
- ***Paul Reddick & The Gamblers** *Alive in Italia* Stony Plain
- ***Brian Blain** *I'm Not Fifty Anymore* Self
- ***Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar** *The Reckless One* Gypsy Soul
- Johnny Iguana** *Chicago Spectacular!* Delmark
- ***Smoke Wagon Blues Band** *The Ballad of Albert Johnson* Self
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