



2013 KBA WINNER  
BLUES SOCIETY  
OF THE YEAR

## JONTAVIOUS WILLIS

### YOUNG BLUESMAN IN THE TRADITION

BY JACK HADLEY

It seems that whenever the topic of “the future of the blues” or “keeping the blues alive” comes up you can predict what that future looks like. And that picture usually doesn’t include someone who looks and sounds like Jontavious Willis.

Just twenty-one years old, Jontavious is a college student from Greenville, Georgia, who has captured the attention of bluesmen like Taj Mahal and Keb’ Mo’, among others.



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# SHOUTIN' THE BLUES

BY TARRY UNDERWOOD

The Denver Blues scene just lost a piece of iconic history with the closing of Ziggy's. The blues bar will never be the same. My heart breaks for Carla, JC and all the staff that put all their heart and soul into this great neighborhood bar. In just the last three years, three of my favorite music venues have closed now that Ziggy's has joined the Boulder Outlook and the D Note. This is just a reminder that it is up to us blues fans to go to at least one event a week to support the blues scene and keep it alive.

Come support your favorite local artists at the Member's Choice Awards on December 3rd at Dazzle. Mojomama and Jack Hadley will perform followed by Southern Avenue. The show starts at 6:00 pm.

The Colorado Blues Society is still looking for some important volunteers. We need someone to manage the merchandise for our events. This person is responsible for overseeing the merchandise booth at events and ensuring an adequate stock of inventory is available. We also need someone to coordinate volunteers-This person recruits and schedules volunteers as needed for various events. You do not have to commit to serving on the board to help with these positions. If interested, email me at blueswood77@comcast.net



**THE COLORADO BLUES SOCIETY** was formed to create a greater awareness and wider appreciation of the American indigenous art form, the BLUES.

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Affiliated with The Blues Foundation  
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# ZIGGIE'S

*photo Kit Hedman*


JC CUMMINGS AND CARLA JORDAN. PHOTO © KIT HEDMAN


Club owners are like musicians. They do what they do for the love: of music, people and causes they believe in. Carla Jordan and Jc Cummings were like that. Ziggie's was more than a "blues" club. It was a habit. It was a place to catch up with old friends, dance, jam on some tunes and, yes, have a few drinks, too.

If you needed a place to have a fundraiser for someone in distress Ziggie's was always there. No hesitation, at the drop of a hat. I would sometimes hear musicians complain that they never made a lot of money playing at the club. Really? Try running a nightclub 24/7 and you'll see how tough it really is.

Ziggie's closed a few months ago. The city of Denver lost an iconic venue that hosted local, national and international blues acts. Chicago blues singer Delores Scott loved performing at Ziggie's and many others did, too. Carla and Julie: thank you for everything. We love you!

**JACK HADLEY**


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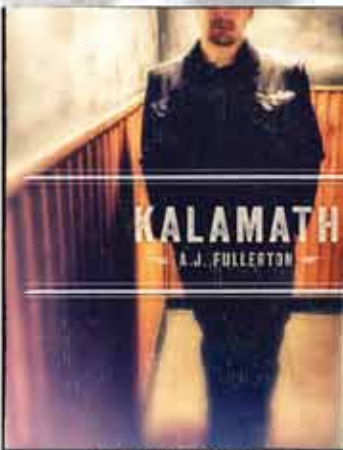
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Sat • January 13th • 9pm  
**To Be Announced** • Live Music

Fri • January 19th • 9pm  
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# JONTAVIOUS WILLIS

## YOUNG BLUESMAN IN THE TRADITION

BY JACK HADLEY

*Continued from pg. 1*

I met Quon on Facebook and started following his incredible rise on the national stage. Here is my interview with Jontavious Willis:

**JH:** First of all, when did you switch to “Quon”? Jontavious is real cool, by the way.

**JW:** My nickname is Quon. My real name is Jontavious. I go by Jontavious professionally. I only put that name on social media to decipher my Personal page from my fan page.

**JH:** Do you come from a musical family? Tell me about your roots.

**JW:** Not so much musical but I come from a family that is full of singers. I grew up in the Baptist church singing at the age of 3. You learn how to sing in church. The most important thing in blues is the voice. Not opinion, straight facts. I learn how to use my voice and later saw the parallel with field hollers and spiritual songs. Our church is 115 years old and we sing some of the same songs from long ago. It all plays into my musical development.

**JH:** You play guitar, harmonica and, of course, you're a singer. Are you completely self-taught?

**JW:** Well, I picked up a few things here and there from folks but 97% of what I know is what I've taught myself.



**JH:** I wonder if you consider yourself a blues crusader, so to speak? A lot of the music that is being presented to blues festival audiences these days is more rock than blues. How are real blues fans responding to your music?

**JW:** They respond well, I think. I try to make what I do fun. I don't want them to feel bad once I'm done playing. I put my all into it. I think we miss a lot of originality and personality in today's blues. I don't consider myself a crusader. I'm just doing my job.

**JH:** At what age did you pick up the guitar? Did you ever check out different styles of blues, or was it acoustic blues from the beginning? Did you go through an electric phase?

**JW:** I was 14 when I started. My first guitar was an electric Fender. My second was a old craftsman acoustic by Kay. Once I played it I loved the acoustic sound. I still play electric every now and then. I always was interested in other styles. I listen to Piedmont style, Delta, Texas, Memphis etc. I never wanted to be locked in one space.

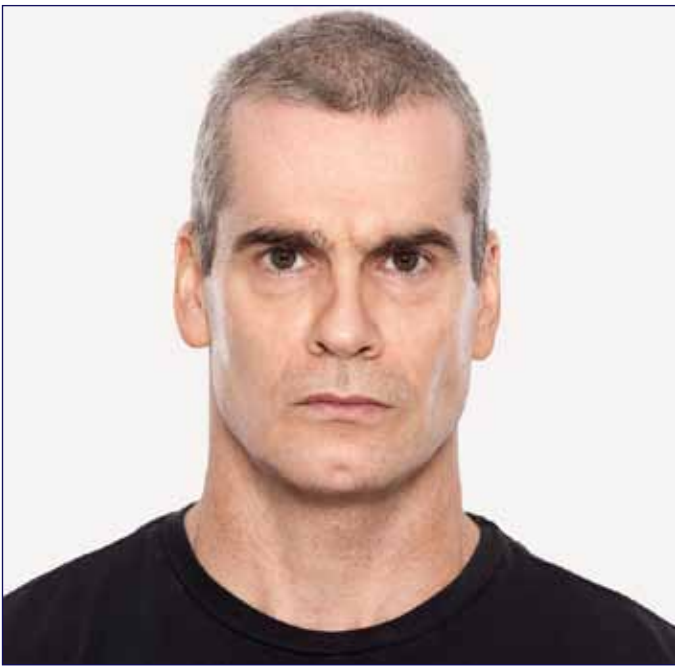
*Continued on page 13*

*“That’s my Wonderboy, the Wunderkind...  
He’s a great new voice of the twenty-first century  
in the acoustic blues. I just love the way he plays...”*

*- Taj Mahal*



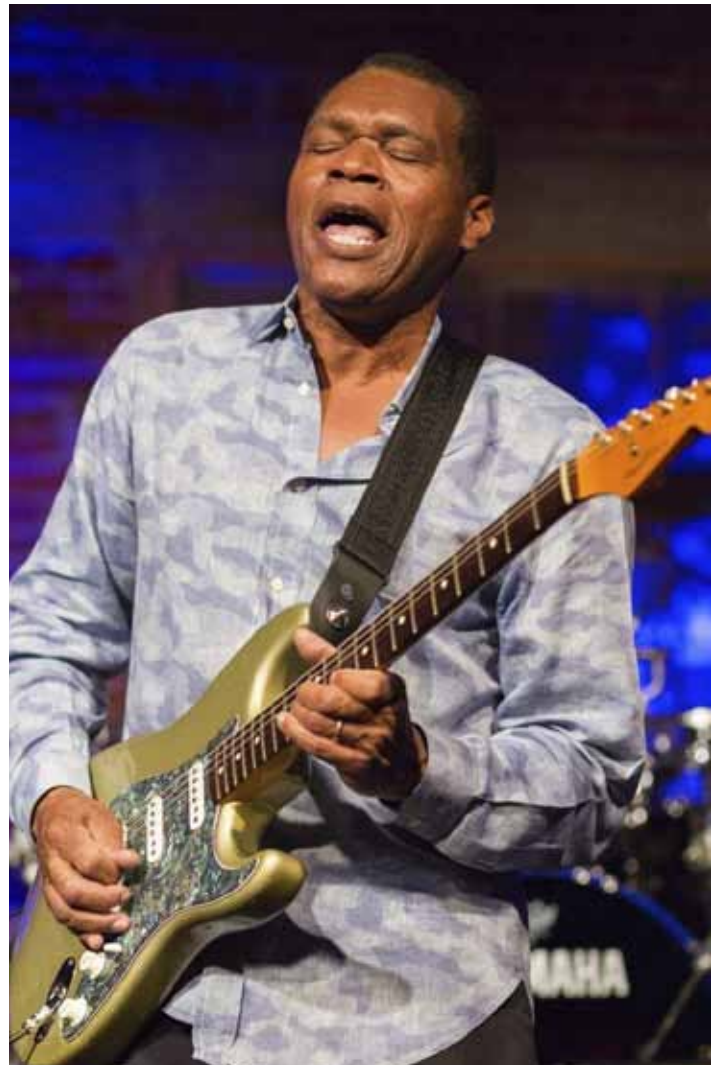
# Blues Quotes



***"The blues is losing someone you love and not having enough money to immerse yourself in drink."  
- HENRY ROLLINS***



***"The musicians that didn't know music could play the best blues. I know that I don't want no musicians who know all about music playin' for me."  
- ALBERTA HUNTER***



***"Blues for me is having things not go your way - life, love, job, money...it is not about the oppression of my ancestors, who were trying to get back at the overseers. Blues is different for my generation."  
- ROBERT CRAY***

# **CBS NEEDS YOU!**

**The Colorado Blues Society is looking for Blues fans interested in serving on our Board of Directors.**

**ALL OFFICER POSITIONS: President, 2 vice presidents, Treasurer, and Secretary are up for election as well as several Directors at Large.**

**We meet once a month (2nd Tuesday each month) at 7PM at KGNU in Boulder.**

**We also communicate via email to discuss issues as they come up.**

**We need folks that have some time to give to the Board. We have a number of committees that members serve and lead: Membership, Public Relations, Education, IBC, Media, Volunteer coordinator, and Merchandise...with an immediate need for help in the Merchandise area, although we are always open to new ideas and areas we can expand to. The most important quality is a willingness to participate and help in most any area.**

**The Colorado Blues Society was the Blues Foundation's Blues Organization of the Year in 2013.**

**Interested? Email Wolf at [upamtn@comcast.net](mailto:upamtn@comcast.net) or [info@coblues.org](mailto:info@coblues.org) and tell us about yourself.**

**CBS is a 501c3 non-profit that supports the Colorado Blues community.**



# Blues Quotes

*"I just like the blues better  
than rock n' roll."*  
- JOHNNY WINTER



*"I'm not a blues singer. I'm a diva."*  
- NINA SIMONE

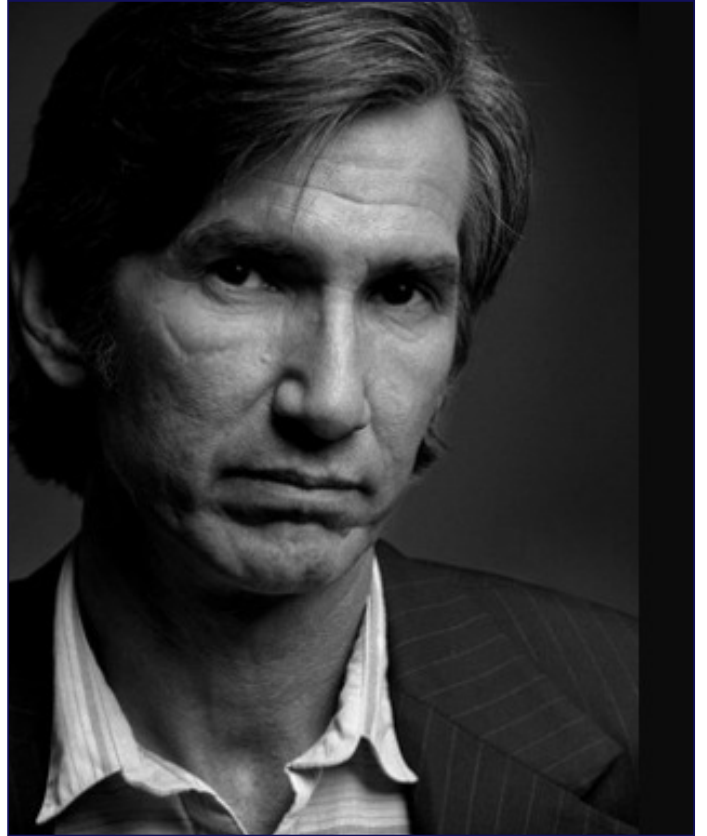


*"Blues is a natural fact, is  
something that a fellow  
lives. If you don't live it you  
don't have it. Young people  
have forgotten to cry the  
blues. Now they talk  
and get lawyers  
and things."*  
- BIG BILL BROONZY

# Blues Quotes



*"Audiences like their blues singers  
to be miserable."*  
-JANIS JOPLIN



*"There are only two kinds of music:  
blues and zippety-doo-dah."*  
- TOWNES VAN ZANDT



*"When the slaves left Africa, they left us  
this music. They left us blues."*  
-YUSSOU N'DOUR

# JONTAVIOUS WILLIS

## YOUNG BLUESMAN IN THE TRADITION

BY JACK HADLEY

*Continued from pg. 1*

**JH:** Who are your musical influences?

**JW:** My Grandad is my biggest. He influenced my singing and Muddy Waters would be the next. Muddy was my introduction to the blues. From there I went down many main roads and side roads. So I picked up countless influences.

**JH:** Tell me about your guitar style(s). Is it a particular style or a combination of styles? Are you playing in open tunings as well or standard? What kinds of guitars are you playing these days?

**JW:** I play multiple styles and tunings as well. I actually was playing 5 years in an alternate tuning I made up. I didn't learn standard tuning until October of 2015. My main guitar now is a Gibson L-00.

**JH:** You have a number of videos of live performances on YouTube. Your work is spectacular! How did you come to the attention of Taj Mahal? And congratulations on your opening show on the TajMo Tour this year!

**JW:** Thank you. Well, Taj seen the video I did on YouTube called Lucy Mae. He said he noticed the way I was playing was in another tuning and one thing lead to another and in 2015 he let me on stage with him. The rest is history.

**JH:** Are you doing more national and international tours these days? We would love to have you come out west to Colorado.

**JW:** Oh yes, a lot. Once I get done with college next year I'll be traveling like I want to.

**JH:** As a performer, do you prefer smaller, intimate venues over the big stage?

**JW:** Both have their perks. A smaller space you can see everyone and it's very relaxed. Some bigger stages you're high off the ground and it can be some disconnect there. But I really think it depends on the crowd.

**JH:** What have you learned about Black history on your blues journey? It seems like the majority of the current blues audience is made up of White people. What are your thoughts on that situation? Is it even an issue for you? Do you feel a need to educate people about the blues?

**JW:** I've learned so much about Black history in blues. Blues is and has been black culture for centuries. It's way beyond music and the guys who recorded it. Yes, the audience now is made up of more white folks than black. Of course, there's a reason behind it all. We have to be the ones to reinvent the blues which is happening as we speak. A resurgence of black blues players, young black blues players. Who I have no doubt will bring the black folks back in the crowds. Blues will be played on major airways and will be in the light again. It won't be long. And yes, I feel I have to educate people about blues because many really don't

understand it. They know the music aspect but don't think about culture. Growing up hearing different sounds and experiencing different things. The blues was born out of religion and systematic racism. These two forces are in full swing. That's the reason the blues will never die.

**JH:** Are you working on new material at the moment? I know you're a college student as well so you must have a tight schedule.

**JW:** I sure am. I plan on recording my next album next year. More info about that in the coming months. Yes, this year has been the worse as far as being so busy. I took 6 classes online this semester and did touring. But I got to get it done.

**JH:** Any closing thoughts for your fans?

**JW:** Please feel free to check out my website [jontaviouswillis.com](http://jontaviouswillis.com) and like me at Jontavious Willis on Facebook.

*“Only a few like him  
emerge every decade or  
so, when even the most  
hard core blues fans  
realize immediately  
that this is the  
real deal.”*

*- Frank Matheis,  
Living Blues  
Magazine*



# Blues Quotes

*"The blues to me is like being very sad, very sick, going to church, being very happy...it's sort of a mixed up thing. You just have to feel it."*  
- BILLIE HOLIDAY



*"I've always felt that blues, rock 'n roll and country are just about a beat apart."*  
- WAYLON JENNINGS



*"When all the original blues guys are gone, you start to realize that someone has to tend to the tradition. I recognize that I have some responsibility to keep the music alive, and it's a pretty honorable position to be in."*  
- ERIC CLAPTON

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# REVIEWS

## The Norman Jackson Band IT'S THE DRUMMER'S FAULT



Based in Springfield, MO, the Norman Jackson Band finished third overall at the 2016 International Blues Challenge. The band's motto is "Get Your Happy On!" and their music will indeed make you smile and move. They serve up a platter of bluesy funk, soul, and R&B with a big side of showmanship. The disc opens with "Norman's Blues," the story of Jackson's musical journey from Detroit and Chicago across the country, paying tribute to many influences and styles — the lyrics could be an anthem for blues artists.

"Givin' Up" expresses the pain of a failing relationship, probably the most classic of all blues themes, and Jackson's voice gives the song an authenticity a less-seasoned performer probably couldn't. The lyrics to "Man of My House" give a very positive gender-equality message over a mid-tempo blues/funk rhythm. "Healthy Woman" kicks up the pace with its message of a happy relationship (yes, they do happen

in blues songs). Things slow down again with the first half of "All Alone," a haunting instrumental featuring Rick Shortt's sax and a very subtle guitar intro from Norman — the tempo picks up a bit for the second half of the tune but doesn't get too fast. "Grandmama Says" opens with Danny Williams's catchy, funky bass shuffle intro before the other instruments join in, leading to Jackson's vocal homage to a lady who helped shape him into the man he would become.

Next up is "Water Faucet" (can't turn me off and on). This one tells its story with some irony and humor but Jackson's message is clear enough: he wants his woman to treat him right, with the implication that he will reciprocate. "When You Came into My Life" is a lovely ballad, in which Jackson's soul-infused vocals tell how he was blessed by finding

his love — the arrangement on this one is special. The up-tempo "Old Time Way" conveys a sense of nostalgia about the way the past is remembered, accurately or not, and it's a good dancing tune. In "Greene County Blues," Jackson tells young listeners to be careful lest they end up "on vacation in Greene County probation" — I don't know whether the lyrics come from personal experience but they ring true. Of course, older folks have always cautioned younger folks on such matters, with varying degrees of success — one hopes the song's advice is taken to heart. Closing out the set, "Snake in My House" is a slow-blues take on the Back Door Man: "There's a two-legged snake in my house; he only slithers out when I'm not at home" — retelling another classic blues story with both sung and spoken lyrics.

Jackson's gritty vocals and crisp guitar riffs deliver the goods throughout. The rhythm section includes Ron Brown on drums, Danny Williams on bass, and Marcus Chatman on organ. Jackson shares front-man duties with Shortt, who soars with his performance on sax, in more ways than one — he's the only person I've ever seen play a horn while in mid-air, which he did quite a bit during the 2016 IBC finals — his playing is excellent whether or not he's on solid ground, and he also provides backing vocals. Jackson and Shortt are the only soloists on the disc.

The cover art begs the question of what Ron did to land Rick behind bars but I fear we'll never know. What we do know is that the truth of the blues is told in these eleven songs. You can find more information about the band at [www.thenormanjacksonband.com](http://www.thenormanjacksonband.com), including a link to purchase the CD.

- JIM PRIMOCK

*"...a platter of bluesy  
funk, soul, and R&B  
with a big side of  
showmanship..."*

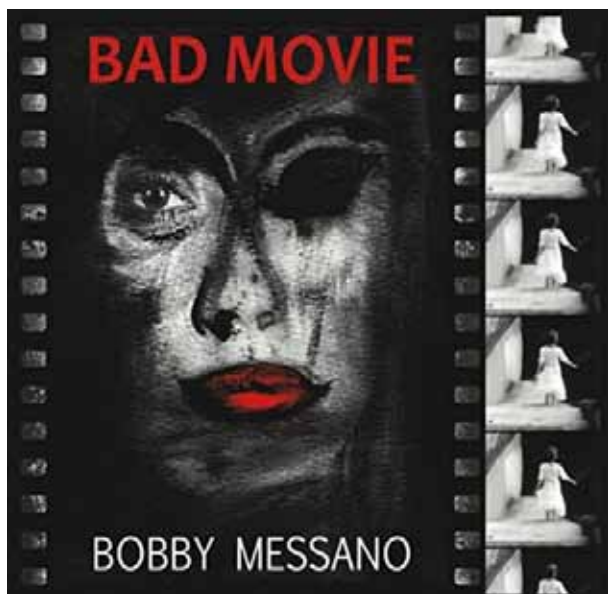


# REVIEWS

**Bobby Messano**

**BAD MOVIE**

**The Prince Frog Record Company**



Perhaps I was eavesdropping when I overheard this long-haired hippie type tell musician Clay Kirkland about his latest goings-on at an International Blues Competition recently held in Littleton. His banter quickly became intriguing. His latest record was garnering acclaim from blues pundits around the galaxy and how he split time between Nashville and Florida. I quickly surmised that this enthusiastic, zealous individual wasn't any local cat but perhaps an industry vet with plenty of road-weary miles under his belt. This gentleman turned out to be blues rocker Bobby Messano, who was in town visiting, gigging and filling in as a judge for that afternoon's competition. Interestingly, Messano's got serious cred: 26 Grammy nominations, several blues hall of fame inductions and a whole other life in rock-n-roll where, in one 80s video, he looked like a Richard Simmons health nut shredding guitar strings.

The title track, a hellacious screaming stomper, sets up the whole paradigm of rocking out while maintaining a sense of humor. He's not afraid to have the joke pointed at him, as evidenced by the "Bad Movie" video where he's knocked out by a lady boxer, drives off a cliff, shot up by a banjo-playing cowboy and blown up in an explosion, among other things.

"If the Phone Ain't Ringin, It's Not Me Not Callin'" is another great one. Built on a foundation of a fuzzed-out Bo Diddly Beat, Messano delivers such lines as 'I don't need to hear all your dramas / or who's coming to the party in your pajamas.'

Though there are a few power ballads, Messano excels at up-tempo numbers. He's different than today's crop of blues rockers. His approach is still guitar dominated but not wanky, self-indulgent histrionics. He achieves the rare balance of knowing when to apply heat and make it groove while varying his tones and textures to keep it interesting for non-guitar freaks.

But a couple of things makes Bad Movie avoid the one trick pony trap. First, there are the stylistically diverse songs such as the reggae-tinged "You Left Me No Choice," the George Benson-esque "The Girl That Got Away" and the funky "Too Good to be True." Second, a handful of songs are politically charged where Messano goes beyond the typical blues rhetoric to express deeper thoughts. He addresses ruling class oppression on the throbbing jazzy shuffle "I Thought We Had This," a brilliantly composed tune where the

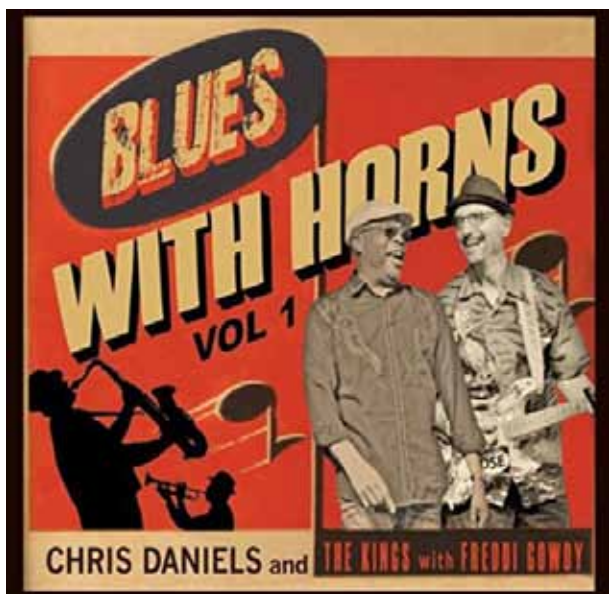
neatly dovetailed verses are in a different key than the chorus. The anthemic "We Need a Blessing" was inspired by election night. Taking a stance positions Messano as a serious artist more so than just cranking out party music. Keep on an eye on him.

- DAN WILLING

*"...achieves the rare balance of knowing when to apply heat and make it groove while varying his tones and textures to keep it interesting for non-guitar freaks...."*

# REVIEWS

**Chris Daniels & The Kings  
with Freddi Gowdy  
BLUES WITH HORNS VOL. 1  
Moon Voyage Records 2017**



This release by one of Colorado's best-known bands has garnered a lot of national attention since its debut during the summer. In his liner notes, Chris writes about meeting a young blues fan who thought blues consisted entirely of the 12-bar structure with guitar, bass, drums, and possibly a harp or keyboard — but no horns. I know plenty of blues fans closer to my age who think the same thing. These 10 songs are solidly based in the blues but, like offerings from many other acts, they cross boundaries of genre (perhaps subgenre is the better term) into funk, soul, and beyond. The result is an eclectic, enjoyable set of familiar and new music.

The Daniels original "Sweet Memphis" kicks things off with a rocking homage to Blues City — and having been there, the song reminds me of Beale during the IBC. Next is a cover of "Fried Food/Hard Liquor," written (and first recorded) by Rex Peoples in 2015.

Chris and co-frontman Freddi Gowdy share the lead vocals, retaining the spirit of the original without trying to duplicate it. Clay Kirkland's harp adds a nice counterpoint to the horns on this one.

Freddi co-wrote "Get Up Off the Funk" with Larry Wilkins — I don't know when they wrote it but it sounds like something Freddi would have performed with Henchi and the Soul Setters a few decades ago. Its party-time rhythm will inspire a lot of movement. Sam Cooke's "Soothe Me Baby" captures the lyrical feel of the original version while bringing the instruments forward in the mix (remember, folks, this is a party band).

Bobby Bland's "Wouldn't Treat a Dog (the Way You Treated Me)" is straight-up soul blues the way it's meant to be performed — passionate vocals fronting tight instrumentation, telling the story of a frustrated, broken heart.

Johnny "Guitar" Watson's "Baby's in Love with the Radio" features an excellent sax solo by Jim Waddell. It's another very good dance number and reminds me of summer evenings cruising around Denver in the mid-60s. Elvin Bishop's "Can't Even Do Wrong Right" returns the focus to ironic humor. It's a fun song highlighted by a clever trumpet solo from Darryl Abrahamson and low-end vibrato from Daren Krammer's trombone. Part way through another Johnny Watson cover, the humorous "You Can Stay but That Noise Must Go," Freddi throws in a comment about putting on an old Freddi/Henchi CD to impress some ladies. I had to laugh, having followed that band long ago. The Buddy Miles classic "Them Changes" gets the entire band rocking, with an intense bass line from Kevin Lege and some killer guitar work.

"Rain Check," another Daniels original, closes out the set. It's a nostalgic, old-timey story song about life lessons from Chris's mother. It features some lovely piano work from Doug Krause and another shot of harp from Clay Kirkland but the rest of the band sat out, which I think was the right choice. The artwork deserves special mention because I've never seen another CD package in the form of a three-dimensional, hollow, accordion fold. It may not add to the sound but it sure did grab my attention and it could win a design award. Blues with Horns, Vol 1 offers something else I especially like: a lot of vocal harmony by Chris, Freddi, and special guests Hazel Miller and Coco Brown. The CD will be available at all of the band's shows.

- JIM PRIMOCK

# REVIEWS

## Big George & The Blue Tones THIRD TIME IS A HABIT



Longtime CBS members will be delighted to hear the ultra-tasty guitar licks and vocals of former Boulderite Jay Summers on this very enjoyable set. Jay was one of the first performers I met when I got involved in CBS in the late 1990s, so it was a real treat for me to get this CD from Jay's former bandmate, Joe Day.

In addition to Mr. Summers, the 10 tracks on this CD are performed by Big George Preto on harmonica, Mo Fernandez on piano, Chris Smith on bass and vocals, and Johnny Minguez on drums. The band members also wrote or co-wrote eight of the songs. Although they don't take many solos, Chris and Johnny do an excellent job of providing the rhythms that drive this CD.

People unfamiliar with the blues tend to assume that all blues songs are sad and serious — but real blues fans know better. Humor has long been an important component of blues lyrics and the opening track (and Summers original), "Caught Lookin'," offers some

clever battle-of-the-sexes irony along with its swinging rhythm. Next up is Big George's "Trampin'" — George, Jay, and Mo show off their chops on this slow blues instrumental. Next, Little Walter's classic "Tell Me Mama" is powered by Chris's vocals and Johnny's quick-shuffle snare work. Jay's title track slows things down again with its phone-based story of a troubled relationship.

Smith's "She Won't Be Back" is next, a medium-slow blues with Big George's sweet harp work behind the sad irony of the lyrics. Jay's "Lucky Man" brings his guitar more prominently into the mix than on the earlier tracks — in fact, all the instruments have a slightly stronger presence on this rhumba (which includes a shuffle guitar solo — that seems a bit odd but it works). This one is followed by another of Jay's songs, "Sweet Little Woman," a mid-tempo

shuffle with some very upbeat lyrics (remember, not all blues songs are sad). The soloists really shine on this one and do an excellent job of playing off one another. It's easy to tell how carefully they listen, which I believe is the foundation of a good band. George's "Slammin'" is another instrumental track, a medium shuffle with each musician getting plenty of time to strut his stuff. The arrangement on this one is pretty special.

"House of Blue Lights" (first recorded in 1946 and covered many times since) is next — this song's traditional boogie woogie background mixes throughout with a rollicking, up-tempo shuffle. Jay sings lead with backing vocals from Chris.

The set closes with the (too) short instrumental "Little Ditty," co-written by George and Mo — it only runs 1:13 but it makes its statement. I would have preferred at least another minute for this one but I'm glad it was included.

All in all, *THIRD TIME IS A HABIT* is a very enjoyable listen, thanks to an old pal and four of his very talented friends. I would also recommend looking for them if you happen to be in the Los Angeles area. As of this writing, there was no band website but their Facebook page should include information about how to purchase the CD: [www.facebook.com/Big-George-and-The-Blue-Tones-1801460870123356/](http://www.facebook.com/Big-George-and-The-Blue-Tones-1801460870123356/)

- JIM PRIMOCK

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The Colorado Blues Society is dedicated to increasing awareness of and appreciation for the Blues as an indigenous American Art form (and the wellspring from which all contemporary popular American music originated).

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The Blue Star Connection (BSC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing music into the lives of children and young adults who are fighting cancer and other life-challenging situations. We also work with musical therapists in various hospitals and clinics. We also host fundraisers and benefit concerts in many cities around the world.

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