

BLUES NEWS

THE BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE BLUES SOCIETY OF TULSA



Blues Society of Tulsa Celebrating 17 Years! 2002 - 2019

Volume 17, Number 6

www.bluessocietyoftulsa.com

November/December 2019

THE SOUL OF SOUL CITY

by Bill Martin



photos by Sandi Morrow

It was a bitter sweet day indeed, the last full day of operation on Sept. 29th at Soul City with Dustin Pittsley's Sunday Brunch. A great supportive crowd filled the patio area showing their love, appreciation and support for Kevin and Amy Smith and wonderful staff and wishing them well in their new adventure, which can't happen soon enough. Look for their new live music venue on Main Street in Jenks where there really is a live music desert. Thanks Soul City and all the great musicians that have played there for a ton of great memories!



Long Distance Blues Society of Tulsa Fan

We want to give a special shout out to Floyd Perry of Boston, MA. Floyd is a veteran of the Korean War and has been an avid fan of the blues and playing his harp for 25 years now.

He visited Tulsa a few months ago to visit family and went to the Red River Jam where Craig Vaughn invited him up to play a couple songs.

We are very blessed to be able to reach out to Blues fans in the Tulsa Area and beyond, helping to "keep the Blues alive". – Christina Rybacki

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Do you play an instrument (and yes, the voice is an instrument) and have a genuine interest in the Blues genre? Then apply for our Student Grant! The Blues Society of Tulsa is dedicated to "keeping the blues alive" and an important part of that focus is to find and nurture young musicians that are truly interested in playing the blues. The winner of the award will receive \$500 to pursue further education and musical development. Application packets are available on the Blues Society of Tulsa website at bluessocietyoftulsa.com. Application deadline is **December 31, 2019**. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity. And "pass the word" among your fellow students.

"PRACTICAL GUITAR" with Hamilton Loomis

Known for his Blues Harmonica Workshops, **BY POPULAR DEMAND** Hamilton is teaching a 2-day guitar clinic called "Practical Guitar"! Over two afternoons, he'll share insight on his playing style and approach to the instrument, and most importantly, offer many practical techniques & shortcuts that have helped him through his journey. Do you play guitar but feel stuck? Hamilton has some guaranteed "RUT-BREAKERS" that can help you expand your guitar vocabulary! This clinic is geared towards **INTERMEDIATE** guitarists, **ACOUSTIC OR ELECTRIC** looking to improve chording, soloing, or both. There will be an emphasis on the **BLUES** style, but most techniques will apply to other styles as well.

THE DATES: It's a TWO-day workshop -- PART 1 Sat Nov 9, & continues with PART 2 Sun Nov 10.

THE TIMES: 1pm - 4pm BOTH days, Nov 9 & 10.

THE LOCATION: WOODY GUTHRIE CENTER CLASSROOM, 102 E Matthew B. Brady St, Tulsa OK 74103. 918-574-2710.

THE COST: Only \$75 per person (includes BOTH days!)

PLEASE BRING: Your guitar and a small amp (if electric). You'll get some informative handouts to take with you. Space is limited, so please **RESERVE** your spot now! Go to hamiltonloomis.com

INSIDE:

Harpin' the Blues, Blues Choice Awards Voting Ballot, CD Reviews and more ...

Welcome Our New Members!

Jaime Thomas and Rick & Robin Clemons

ATTENTION MEMBERS:

We don't want to miss "What's Happening." Send us pics and notes regarding events and performances.

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BST OFFICERS:

President: Christina Rybacki
Vice President: Amber Pittsley
Secretary: Kevin Payne
Treasurer: Tammy Hodges

BLUES NEWS STAFF:

Editor: eLiz Hollis
e-mail: eLiz@radioidl.com
Design: Siren Sorail
e-mail: siren.sorail@gmail.com

COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSONS:

Membership: Christina Rybacki
Awards: Harry Williams
Blues in Schools: David Berntson
e-mail News: Curt Fillmore

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Kerry Kudlacek, Bill Martin,
Andrew Rethmeyer, eLiz Hollis,
Larry Watt, Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro

FOUNDING MEMBERS:

Jeff Bullard, John and Sharon Eskew, Jeff Falali,
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The Blues
Foundation

Blues Society of Tulsa, P.O. Box 2836, Tulsa, OK 74101, is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization with the purpose of preserving and promoting the blues in Tulsa and Northeastern Oklahoma. Blues News is published bi-monthly and encourages your support through personalized membership card and the Blues News newsletter. BST members are encouraged to submit articles, photos and other materials for publication. Deadline for both editorial items and advertising is the 1st of the month (30 days) prior to publication.

Blues Society of Tulsa

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If you want on the BST "what's happening"

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If you live outside the USA please add \$10 to the single and family memberships listed above.



ATTENTION: A check mark in this box indicates that your annual membership payment is due. Thank You!



CURT FILLMORE: Ready for a New Chapter in His Life

In our last issue of Blues News (September/October) our dear friend Curt Fillmore apparently wrote his last four CD reviews. He began writing for us in 2009 and during this span we estimate he contributed an estimated 200 or more reviews.

Here are some excerpts Curt included to the Blues Society with his final CD reviews: "It is with a heavy heart that I relinquish all of my Blues Society responsibilities. After 10 years of helping The Blues Society of Tulsa it's time to begin a new chapter in my life....to say a lot can happen in 10 years would be a massive understatement! But every single bit of it was great!! And what amazing music - I've not only got to discover (new music), but to learn about it too. And learning to write better & better because of it all is a special bonus."

Curt also launched CurtsList.com around the same time he became involved with the Blues Society. He has provided the one and only continuous live music updates during this time, listing over 200 listings weekly. Amazing!

Thank you Curt for all your contributions to the Blues Society, Tulsa live music, your love and support of music, and what you continue doing with CurtsList.com. We look forward to watching your next chapter in life unfold. – **Bill Martin**

LOCAL BIRTHDAYS

November: 4 – Bobby Parker; 8 – Hank Thompson (2007); 15 – David Teegarden Sr., Speedy West Jr. (2011); 17 – Issac Hanson, Larry Moss; 20 – Bob Childers (2008); 21 – John Hoff; 23 – Maxx Campbell; 26 – Bob Wallace; 27 – Rudy Scott; 28 – Matt Mason; 29 – Harry Williams. **December:** 1 – Casey Van Beek; 2 – Bill Davis; 4 – Darrel Smith; 5 – JJ Cale (2013); 7 – Jay McShannon (2006); Sam Kinison (1992); 11 – David Gates; 23 – Rick Huskey, Chet Baker (1988); 24 – David Tanner; 25 – Jeff Martinson; 27 – Steve Pryor (2016); 30 – Charles Tuberville

BST MONTHLY MEETINGS

**BST MONTHLY MEETINGS HELD THE 3RD TUESDAY
OF EACH MONTH**

Next monthly meetings are

Tuesday, November 20th, January 21st, and February 18th.

*Check our website or our FB page for meeting location and
December Christmas party information.*



HARPIN' THE BLUES:

In the Blues world the Harmonica is affectionately known as the "Harp". In the mid 1800's, cowboys played their harmonicas to calm restless herds, soothe their horses and keep themselves company around the camp fire and on the long trails west.

In the United States, the harmonica became very popular as a blues instrument. The Harp was never really featured as a leading instrument in early blues bands, being more about background color to a band's sound, much as backup singers enhance the lead vocals, but there were some exceptional harp players on the scene. In the 1930's and early 1940's a man named **John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson** became well known. After the Second World War, Chicago became a major centre for the blues, with great players such as **Rice Miller "Sonny Boy Williamson II"** and **Walter Marion Jacobs "Little Walter"**. Many consider Little Walter to be the greatest blues Harp player. When Little Walter joined Muddy Water's band in Chicago and blew his harp into a microphone, he established the harp as an essential element in the urban blues sound. He died in 1968.

African American traditions use a different scale than European traditions, so they could not play some of their notes on the harmonica. That is, until someone figured out that you could "bend" a harmonica's notes. If you play a Harmonica "backwards" – that is, suck air in (draw), in what is called "cross harp" or "second position" – you can take notes and force them down a pitch or two. It is really a completely different technique. It "bends" the draw reed on that hole creating a lower tone. It coincides with the love for this instrument to sound like the voice, to make the instrument

say what you say, and to make it warmer, more expressive of the voice's emotional timbres. In the Blues, a harmonica can cry and wail, express pain and sorrow, and bring an emotional feeling to the listener.

Most Blues players prefer a ten hole harmonica (Diatonic) using the "cross harp" technique, taking the key note from the second "draw" hole rather than the fourth "blow" hole, thus one-fourth above the given key. The emphasis on the "draw" allows the notes to be bent more easily, giving the freedom to incorporate the slurs and slides of the human voice.

"Bending notes is a tough technique for beginner harmonica players but it is where the secret to getting a "bluesy sound" lies, because it's the way to get the flat third, fifth and seventh; the blue notes". – **Larry Watt**

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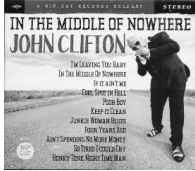

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John Clifton: IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE (Rip Cat Records)

The only thing better than a John Clifton blues album is a John Clifton live show and he's rocked Tulsa's socks off on several occasions with his unique vocals and stage presence. We can't wait for him to return.

In the Middle of Nowhere is John's third release and luckily for his fans he sticks to his first love, old time traditional blues that often kicks your ass. The title tune is about "...an old country boy, that's all I've ever been. I've always dreamed I would break out of this mess and never come back again."

Throughout this album, John proves why he is a world class harmonica player. It also doesn't hurt he has one of my favorite guitarist on this album and in his band, Rip Cat Records owner **Scott Abeyta**. Scott shines in "Keep It Clean", an old blues tune from 1930. On Cool Spot in Hell band members are featured, including guest keyboardist **Bartek Szopinki**.

This album totally immerses itself in traditional blues and reminds me of the heydays of blues greats from **Sonny Boy Williamson** to **Jimmy Rogers** and **Howlin' Wolf**.

This is one of the hardest working, professional and talented bands around – and they deserve our support!

This release is highly recommended and available from Amazon, Bear Family, or John's website. – **Bill Martin**



Vaneese Thomas: DOWN YONDER (Segue Records)

Although I reviewed Vaneese Thomas's last CD and have had the pleasure of working with her on a music showcase in Memphis, until reading the one-sheet accompanying this disc, I was totally unaware of her film and television accomplishments. That makes it understandable why some of the many musicians appearing on *Down Yonder* - her eighth release - are currently enjoying success in that arena as well.

Joining Vaneese - the projects co-producer and writer/co-writer of its twelve tracks - on lead and background vocals are: **Shawn Pelton** on drums and percussion; **Paul Adamy**, **Conrad Korsch** and **Will Lee** on bass; **Al Arlo** on acoustic and electric guitars; Vaneese's hubby and disc's co-producer, **Wayne Warnecke** on dobro and percussion; **Tash Neal** on dobro and electric guitar; **Robbie Kondor** on keyboards and organ; **Charles Hodges** and **Paul Mariconda** on organ; **Marc Franklin** on trumpet; **Tim Ouimette** on trumpet and flugelhorn; **Lannie McMillian** and **Ken Geoffree** on tenor saxophone; **Kirk Smothers** and **Rick Kriska** on baritone saxophone; **Katie Jacoby** on violin; sister **Carla Thomas** and **Berneta Miles** on background vocals; and **Kevin Bacon** on lead vocals.

Feeling as if the failing relationship is somehow her fault, the pain Vaneese is experiencing is quite evident on "I Tried". Although Vaneese may have never actually lived through this anguish, hearing her sing this one will have you betting she has. If there was ever a time where a vocalist was in character, it's right here. Everything about this song is perfect: the sullen rhythm groove Shawn and Paul are laying down; The delicate yet stinging guitar notes Al slips in at just the right times; The soul of Marc, Lannie and Kirk's horns; and of course, with extreme emotion and unbelievable range and tone, the virtual singing lesson that Vaneese is putting on. Too early for best track compliments? I think not!

Still in that guilty frame of mind, this track finds Vaneese traveling down the "Highway Of Regret" - where there is no doubt in my mind that traffic is quite heavy. With this being Katie Jacoby's only appearance on the violin, that alone makes this one worthy of mention. With a simpler music groove going on, Katie adds a bit of country soul to the track.

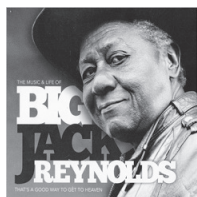
Having been mistreated too many times before, it's time for Vaneese to now come with instructions: "Handle Me Gently". This slow blues ballad starts off with her somewhat asking it softly but eventually leads up to it becoming a firm demand - "handle me gently, handle me slow!" - with that exclamation added for emphasis. This one features outstanding blues guitar by Al and beautiful tandem work on the keyboards by Robbie on the piano and Charles on the organ.

This track centers around some so-called "cold cases" - particularly some unsolved murders that took place in Mississippi and still remain a mystery today. It's a duet that features Kevin Bacon joining Vaneese in sending out the message that it's time to break the chain of this "Legacy Of Pain". Although aware of his music endeavors, this is my first - and I must say very impressive - exposure to Kevin's vocal abilities.

Now if you were to Google search "classic, old school Memphis Soul", although it should, I'm one hundred percent sure that a link to this track would not come up. That said, I do believe I just made my point. "Last Kiss" truly does define classic old school Memphis Soul.

The title track, finds Vaneese feeling wonderfully peaceful as she comes full circle by heading back home, "Down Yonder". This Gospel style song - with its well-sung lead and harmony backing vocals and uplifting lyrics - was a beautiful way to close the album. Helping out nicely was some fine acoustic and lead guitar performances by Al and Tash and an excellent piano performance by Robbie. Other tracks on this most excellent album include: "Ebony Man"; "Wake Me"; "Second Chance"; "Mama He Loves Me"; "Lies"; and "Gone".

Somehow, with many Blues Music Award nominations, Vaneese has yet to step into the winner's circle. Yes, it is indeed a crowded field of deserving talent, but I do believe that "Down Yonder" just might be the vehicle to deliver the gold. - **Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro** (Mary4Music.com)



The Music & Life Of

Big Jack Reynolds:

THAT'S A GOOD WAY TO GET TO HEAVEN

(Third Street Cigar Records)

Unknown legend - is that a thing? It sound's like it shouldn't be and most likely isn't. On the other hand, if you wanted to break the rule, Big Jack Reynolds is the guy to do it with. To those in the Detroit and Toledo areas who knew and worked with him, the man was a legend; but to pretty much the rest of the world, he was virtually unknown. Marshall "Big Jack" Reynolds was strictly a regional blues musician whose amazing talents were sadly kept under the radar. It wasn't until after his death in 1993, when because of a few serious blues collectors, word of Big Jack would begin to spread. Now, some twenty-five years later, with the release of Third Street Cigars and TSC Entertainment's *That's A Good Way To Get To Heaven: The Music & Life Of Big Jack Reynolds* - a CD and DVD collection of Jack's rarest recordings - the word about Big Jack is about to deservedly spread like wildfire.

That's A Good Way To Get To Heaven includes a CD containing twenty tracks, of which a half dozen or so are archival with absolutely no information available. It also includes an eighty-minute DVD. The music disc features: **Marshall "Big Jack" Reynolds** on vocals, harmonica and guitar; **Larry Gold** on guitar; **Johnny "HiFi" Newman** and **Joel Hazzard** on bass; **Slim Tim Gahagan** and **Chris Arduser** on drums; **Chad Smith** on piano; and **The Cobra Twist Horns** which consist of: **Brad "The Razor" Sharp** on trumpet; **Randy "The Slider" Knisely** on trombone; and **Kevin "Nationwide" Maude** on saxophone. Of its twenty tracks, eleven are originals and nine are covers.

The visual disc is loaded with: informative and sometimes hilarious interviews; footage of rare performances not seen since the eighties; other privately recorded performances that have never been seen anywhere; a never before seen performance between Big Jack and **Sir Mack Rice** of "Mustang Sally" and "Cheaper To Keep Her" fame; and footage of Big Jack's only TV appearance.

The CD opens with "Honest I Do", the first of its three **Jimmy Reed** covers and also the first of three never released anywhere tracks. Once you hear his vocal style, along with those piercing high-end harp leads, you'll quickly understand the influence Jimmy had on Big Jack. With Larry, Johnny and Slim in that repetitive rhythm groove that so fit this song, Jack's not the only one with the Jimmy vibe going on. Nicely done cover.

This original track is more straight-up blues. It's titled "You Better Leave That Woman Alone", and if you don't, Big Jack's promising you a big dose of some blues of your own. Good piano-led rhythm by Chad with loads of slick blues guitar licks by Larry.

Singing in a much deeper tone, Big Jack - and the guys - do a killer rendition of **Slim Harpo's** "Scratch My Back". After the harmonica lead and the precise groove the band was in on the intro I was so expecting to hear Slim. Sometimes taking a cover and making it your own is nice and others - like right here - doing it exactly like the original is perfectly fine.

If you're going to cover a **B B King** song and you really want to do it justice then do it with horns. Being the only track featuring the Cobra Twist Horns, that's exactly what the guys did on their

rendition of "Rock Me Baby". With Big Jack at his suave best on the vocals; HiFi and Slim right in the pocket on the rhythm; and Larry laying down the blues guitar leads; it's the horns - with a stellar standout by "Nationwide" on the sax - that give this one its soul.

"Made It Up In Your Mind", a track Big Jack collaborated on, is also unlike anything else on the disc. It sounds like a duo that's featuring the big guy singing and blowin' harp with a pumped-up conga/bongo player providing quite progressive percussion.

One of the disc's rockers, another of Jack's originals and part of that shoebox full of stuff found in a storage closet somewhere - is called "I Had A Little Dog". Obviously, from an earlier point in his career, Jacks sounding quite spry on this organ-led, rhythm fueled dance floor filler.

Other songs on the CD include: "Go On To School" (Reed); "Shame, Shame, Shame" (Reed); "Help Me" (Williamson); "Ah'w Baby" (Jacobs); "Going Down Slow" (Oden); "She Moves Me" (Morganfield); and these originals: "Mean Old People"; "Walk On Up (But Keep That Red Dress On)"; "Poor Boy"; "Hot Potato" "In My Room"; and "You Don't Treat Me Right".

The documentary DVD is highly entertaining. Along with interviews of band members, you'll hear what **Eddie Shaw**, **Harmonica Shah**, and others had to say about the often fun to play with and sometimes not fun to play with, Big Jack.

That's A Good Way To Get To Heaven is a sure bet to appear as a nominee in the "Historical" category on many of next year's awards

16th ANNUAL BLUES CHOICE AWARDS - VOTE!

Voting is now underway in the Blues Society's Blues Choice Awards, which is open to BST members. The Blues Choice Awards are special because the winners are chosen by BST members, who have an exceptional appreciation and love for blues artists in Northeastern Oklahoma and their music, which brings so much joy to our lives.

The rules allow one vote per member in each of the 4 categories. **Deadline for voting is December 1st.** E-mail or send by U.S. mail your ballot to the address(es) found in the membership application box on this page. The winners will be announced in the next issue.

Best Group _____
(Band)

Best Vocalist _____

Best Lead _____
(any lead instrument, guitar, harmonica, keyboards, etc.)

Best Rhythm _____
(drums, bass, rhythm guitar, etc.)

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ballots. This very well produced, very well engineered and very well mastered CD/DVD set is loaded with real deal, old school blues, lots of informative and educational clips and photos and is a must-have for any true blues aficionado. - **Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro** (Mary4Music.com)



Screamin' John & TD Lind:

MR. LITTLE BIG MAN

(Down in the Alley Records)

Mr. Little Big Man is the second release on Down In The Alley Records for Screamin' John and TD Lind. Still with the same members, the band consists of: **Screamin' John Hawkins** on guitars; **Tim Arlon** (a.k.a. TD Lind) on vocals, guitar and piano; **Jeff Crane** on bass and backing vocals; **Paul Culligan** on drums and percussion; and **Joel Pinkerton** on harmonica.

As with their first release, while keeping the rock edge on some of the tracks, the band displays an obvious affection for the blues. "Mr. Little Big Man" contains eleven tracks with five being TD originals and the other six being covers of a mixed bag of blues artists. The disc's producer is rock and roll hall of famer, **Glyn Johns**, who produced so many of the greatest bands from the era that you may just as well say he produced the "British Invasion" and leave it at that.

The track titled "The Letter" (**B.B. King/Jules Taub**) just doesn't get any more low down. With the rhythm guys in the precise pocket that this kind of blues calls for John, TD, and Joel are all over this one. From John's opening screamin' blues guitar licks, to TD's deeply emotional and heartfelt vocals, to Joel blowin' out several scorching high end, low down blues harmonica leads, this one totally reeks blues.

Things get back in high gear on a smokin' shuffle titled "Jelly Roll" (**Taj Mahal**). During an instrumental break that spans the middle half of the track, the guys are all on top of their game as they get into a four-way free for all going toe to toe on guitar, piano, bass, and drums.

"Mr. Little Big Man", another original and the disc's title track, totally rocks. It's a rhythm fueled smoker which combines one of Paul's more profound percussion performances with being the only track featuring two guitars - John on lead and TD on rhythm - making it a great formula for some good ol' house rockin' blues.

The disc closes out with an original song that features the never before heard line of "I ain't gonna be your twisted backbone bitch no more"... just when you thought you'd heard them all. The song's titled "Reaper's Knockin'" and with its banjo-like acoustic guitar pickin'; various instruments of percussion; and bizarre lyrics; it's interestingly different. Other tracks on "Mr. Little Big Man" include: "Shame, Shame, Shame" (**Jimmy Reed**), "All Your Love" (**Magic Sam**), "Way Past Midnight" (**Seth Walker**); and two more originals: "Cold Stone And Emptiness" and "Gonna Drag Ya".



Doug Duffey and BADD:

PLAY THE BLUES

(Out of the Past Music)

Doug Duffey and BADD are a Louisiana based quartet that consists of **Doug Duffey** on vocals, piano and Hammond B3 organ; **Dan Sumner** on

electric guitar, percussion and vocals; **Ben Ford** on bass; and **Adam Ryland** on drums. Should you have not yet noticed, in addition to actually being BADD, the bands name is an acronym of its members first names. *Play The Blues* - which the band indeed does - is their second release and although some lyrics and song titles may strike a familiar chord, all of its nine tracks are originals.

I can't begin to tell you the number of conversations I've been involved in where my baby boomer friends and I reminisced about "The Things We Used To Do". As a matter of fact, most of the things that Doug and the guys have on their list are quite common with the ones on ours. The only difference is that when BADD tells of theirs, they do it in a shuffle that features scorching blues guitar licks, smoking rhythm and melodic lead and backing vocals, which is much more entertaining to hear than ours.

As Doug tells the story of his cheating woman, "Evil" often seems to be his word of choice. Knowing she'll ultimately be the death of him doesn't seem to matter, he just can't break that spell she's cast upon him. In spite of it's dark subject, the rhythm and percussion pleasantly contradicts the mood with a relaxing foot and knee tappin' groove.... that is until that extended mid song guitar solo of Dan's shakes things up some.

Having spent most of his career in New Orleans, the musical styles that influenced him are most evident on "Have You Ever?". At barely over three minutes, there are plenty of rollicking piano highlights.

On "My Driving Wheel" Doug seems to be having a difficult time coping. He can't get up in the morning and he can't sleep at night. Whatever's going on, it's just not right. It seems that his driving wheel has come to a grinding halt. That said, he's wise enough to recognize he still has the power of prayer. The deep rhythm groove that Ben and Adam are laying down and the absolute shredding that Dan's dealing out are a perfect musical accompaniment to the songs dark nature.

One of the most beautifully sung songs I have ever heard in my entire life is **Billy Vera's** "At This Moment". The emotion Billy put into singing that song's compelling lyrics is arguably, second to none. As a matter of fact, so are the lyrics. Like many others, it was the song being played four years after it's release on the TV show "Family Ties" that brought it to my attention and I immediately wanted a copy. Now I'm not ready to say that "A Memory Left to Lose" will rival that but I will tell you that this seven minute melancholic ballad with its emotional vocals and amazing piano playing not only reminded me of that song but it's definitely of that caliber as well. Wow!

Other tracks on "Play The Blues" include: "Big Easy Street Blues," "Drink It On Down," "Talk Of The Town" and "You Got That Somethin'".

Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro

Blues Editor @ www.Mary4Music.com

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John Wooley
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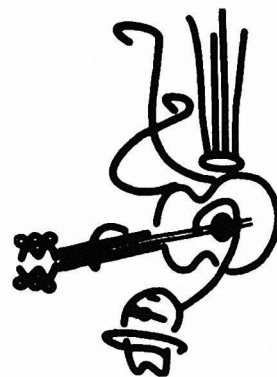
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