



The Philadelphia Blues Society's
Quarterly Newsletter
July to September
2026

Intown Innerview with Sugar Ray Norcia
“playing the Blues since 1979!”



Language of the Blues by Debra Devi
Blues Book Club Corner by Kathryn Gregoire
CD Reviews by Phillip Scott
In Memoriam
Upcoming Blues Concerts at our home-base venue, Jamey's House of Music
...and much more!

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P.B.S. Blues Festival and Christmas Party

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Radio Stations bringing you The Blues!

*WXPB – 88.5FM – “The Blues Show”,
Saturday - 7pm – 11pm w/Jonny Meister

*The Blues Journey” w/Greg G. –
www.rtds.ca – Saturday @ 9am/3pm/9pm
EST, Sunday @3am EST or any time on
demand

*WBJB – 90.5FM – “Box of Blues” w/Stu
Coogan, Sunday – 9pm to 12am

*SiriusXM – Bluesville – 24/7

*WDIY – 88.1FM – “Blues After Hours”
w/Joe Cassano, Tuesday – 11pm to 1am

*RMU Radio –www.rmuradio.com - “Damn
Right I Got the Blues” w/Don Luisi, Thursday
– 4pm to 5pm

Letter from the Editor

Summer and Festival Season is in Full Swing!

In this issue, Intown Innerview, speaks with blues singer-songwriter/Harmonica player, Sugar Ray Norcia.

Language of the Blues by Debra Devi will define what a “Back Door Man” is and what’s a “Bag”.

We’ll be remembering blues musicians who have died between April and July, and one person who was instrumental in signing and producing blues artists like Johnny Winter.

The Blues Book Corner by Kathryn Gregoire will focus on the book “I Ain’t Studdin’ Ya: My American Blues Story by Bobby Rush with Herb Powell.

We’ve got album reviews for you from Philip Scott (phillycheezblues.blogspot.com).

You’ll find information about the Catskills Crossroad Blues Camp. It’s four days in August where you can Learn, Play, Celebrate with blues artists like Charlie Musselwhite, Ruthie Foster, Bobby Rush, Eric Gales, Luther Dickinson, Duke Robillard, John Cleary, Jontavious Willis, and special guest Southern Avenue.

...and The Philadelphia Blues Society line-up for our 2nd Annual Blues Festival, Saturday, October 10, 2026 at Temple University Ambler Campus, is complete!

The Philadelphia Blues Society is always looking for blues-loving volunteers who wish to donate their time in helping to Keep

The Blues Alive, and to help on one of our committees: Education, Membership, Finance, Fundraising & Grants, Public Relations & Marketing, Technology, Events & Festivals, Membership, IBC, Membership, Quarterly Newsletter, and Volunteer. If you are interested in getting involved to help the Philadelphia Blues Society promote, preserve and support blues music through performance, promotion and community education, please email the society at... info@philadelphiabluesociety.org

The Philadelphia Blues Society’s membership has been updated.

Memberships will go from January 1st to December 31st of each calendar year. If you wish to join or renew your membership, just go to our website and click the Join-Renew tab at the top of the homepage. Members get 10% off ticket prices to all P.B.S. events.



Greg Gaughan
Managing Editor

For more information about the Philadelphia Blues Society check out our:
Website: www.philadelphiabluesociety.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaBluesSociety



2ND ANNUAL

PHILADELPHIA BLUES FESTIVAL

★ **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026** ★

NOON – 7PM

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
AMBLER CAMPUS THEATRE
580 MEETINGHOUSE RD
AMBLER, PA

HEADLINER

SUGAR RAY & THE BLUETONES

FEATURING

- ★ THE KELLI BAKER BAND
- ★ STEVE GUYGER & THE EXCELLOS
- ★ ONE DIME BAND
- ★ DEBRA DEVI
- ★ THE WENDY LOGAN BAND
- ★ GARRY COGDELL

Live Blues!
FOOD TRUCKS ★ CRAFT VENDORS

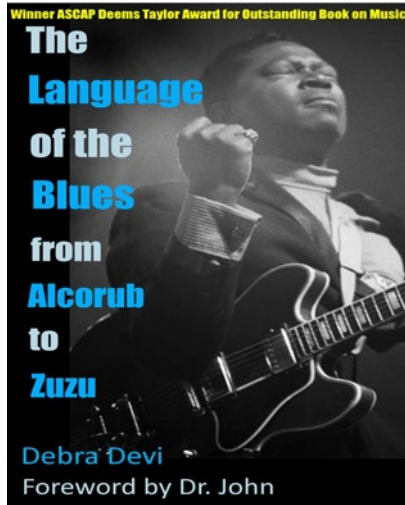
TICKETS & INFO: PHILADELPHIABLUESSOCIETY.ORG ★★

For information on other blues festivals
happening around the tri-state area:
PA/NJ/DE, around the country and the
world, please visit:

<https://bluesfestivalguide.com/emag/2026/>

Language of the Blues

By: Debra Devi



BALING WIRE

Baling wire is the pliable wire used to wrap bales of cotton or hay. Blues guitarists love to claim that their first guitars were made of baling wire tacked to the walls of their sharecropper homes. To make an instrument, one end of the wire is secured to the ground with bricks or rocks, while the other end is nailed to a wall. The player uses one hand to pluck the wire and the other to slide a bottle along its surface for a keening sound.

This makeshift guitar is called a “one-strand-on-the-wall,” and was typically made with baling wire or wire pulled from a broom. It is also called a “diddley bow,” after the African musical bow made with a single string stretched across a gourd.

Howlin’ Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin learned to play a one-strand by watching his older brother: “Yeah, my brother he had the wire upside the wall--baling wire, what you bale hay with. That’s the only string we had at the time. So, it’s wrapped around a big old nail and the nail drove into the wall. Sometimes it comes loose, so I put up another string.

“I wasn’t listening to anything yet, just my brother. I was looking at his playing. It sounded like moaning and everything. Finally, I got this old warped record by Charlie Patton. I found this old 78 record- it was so warped the only thing I could hear was this guy moaning. But boy what a sad moan! Yes, it was. I loved it. After the moan, the record shattered. It just shattered ‘cause it was so warped. That’s the only thing I heard about that guy, but I started to get all the numbers that he made. All down the line. I learned off those records and my mother got me a guitar.”

During a 1975 interview, B.B. King told William Ferris, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, how bricks were used to make a one-string: “Once you nailed this nail in there, put that wire around these two nails, like one on this end and one on the other and wrap it tight. Then you’d take a couple of bricks and you’d put one under this side and one under that one that would stretch this wire and make it tighter. And you’d keep pushing that brick, stretching this wire, making it tight until it would sound like one string on the guitar. Like that.”ⁱ

Blues musicians also used baling wire to make one- and two-stringed instruments similar to those found throughout West Africa, where they are fashioned with resonators made of carved

wood, a gourd, or a tin can.ⁱⁱ Big Bill Broonzy explained: “When I was about ten years old I made a fiddle out of a cigar box, a guitar out of goods boxes for my buddy Louis Carter, and we would play for the white people’s picnics.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Big Joe Williams recalled making a one-string guitar for himself as a child by stapling two thread spools to a small box and stretching bailing wire between the spools. He played it with the neck off a half-pint whisky bottle.^{iv} Harmonica players also used bailing wire to make neck racks for their **harps** so they could play guitar and harmonica at the same time.

BALLING THE JACK

When a conductor got a locomotive steaming at top speed, he was said to be balling the jack, as in “they were balling the jack at the time of the wreck.”³⁷ The train was the jack--short for “the jackass carrying the load.” To “ball” meant to go flat out, pedal to the metal, and came from the railman’s hand gesture signaling the crew to go faster.

By the 1920s, the expression “balling the jack” had leapt from the rail yards into the popular lexicon as an expression for any wild, all-out effort--from dancing to sex to, for gamblers, risking everything on a single toss of the dice. Shortened to “balling,” it came to mean having a wild time in and out of bed.

The phrase was given a push by the Balling the Jack fad, which reportedly began as a sexy **juke joint** dance involving plenty of bumping and grinding. It evolved into a group dance “involving vigorous hand clapping and chanting or singing,” according to *From Juba to Jive* by Clarence Major.ⁱ

A variation was performed in 1913 at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem in a play called *The Darktown Follies*. Theatrical producer Florence Ziegfeld caught the play and liked the dance so much that he bought the rights to it for his Follies of 1913.ⁱ Chris Smith (music) and James Henry Burris (lyrics) wrote “Balling the Jack” for the Follies based on the African American ragtime tune. The Balling the Jack craze swept white America, eventually getting mixed in with the Lindy Hop to become a popular swing step. Judy Garland and Gene Kelly performed the Smith/Burris version of “Balling the Jack” in the 1942 film *Me and My Gal*:

As Bessie Smith sang in “Baby Doll” in 1926, a man can make up for a lot by being a good dancer:

He can be ugly, he can be black
So long as he can eagle rock and ball the jack

Songs:

“Baby Doll”- Bessie Smith/H.Webman”

“St. Louis Blues”- W.C. Handy (William Christopher Handy)

“I Feel So Good”- Big Bill Broonzy (Willie Lee Conley Broonzy)

Debra Devi is a blues/rock musician and author based in Jersey City NJ. The Language of the Blues: From Alcorub to Zuzu (foreword by Dr. John) received the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for Outstanding Book on Music. Order signed copies at <https://debradevi.com/books>.

*You can see Debra Devi and her band perform at Jamey's House of Music on Friday, July 24, 2026. You can purchase your tickets here: www.jameyshouseofmusic.com

Debra and her band will also be performing at this year's 2nd Annual Philadelphia Blues Festival on Saturday, October 10, 2026. You can purchase your tickets here: www.philadelphiabluesociety.org/festival



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CD Reviews

Dana Fuchs – Live in Denmark (Ruf Records)

By Phillip Smith; April 18, 2026

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



Live in Denmark, the eleventh and latest album from Dana Fuchs, was recorded in October 2025 at Godset in Kolding, Denmark. With no overdubs or post-production fixes, what you hear with this recording is a straight-up unbridled performance from one of the best blues-rockers in the biz. Featuring six songs from Fuchs' latest studio album Borrowed Time, this album absolutely cooks. For this show, Fuchs fronts the band on acoustic guitar and lead vocals and is joined by guitarist Jon Diamond, bassist Kevin Mackall, and

drummer Piero Perelli.

Once I hear the thunderous beat and hard-driving rhythm of the show opener "Double Down on Wrong", I am all-in. Between Diamond's searing guitar solo and Fuchs' lyrical critique of government and religion, this track lands as a top favorite. I dig the Southern-rock groove infused in the "Hard Road". Its Stones/Black Crowes vibe sets the perfect tone for this anthem of broken relationships. It's great to hear Fuchs' fearless performance of "Superman" from her 2011 album Love to Beg. The way the world continues to spiral out of control, this song is more relative today than it was fifteen years when it was originally released. It sure lands quite a meaningful punch. A wave of empathy washes over me when Fuchs sings "Nothing You Own". Inspired from a report regarding the impoverished residents of a Cape Town slum, this ballad beautifully cuts to the bone. Fuchs creates a very poignant moment as she introduces "Curtain Close" by dedicating the song to everyone in the audience who has lost someone they love. The tone Diamond coaxes from his guitar perfectly sets the mood for Fuchs' soulfully delivered words. The set comes to its end with a delicious cover of The Stones' 1968 classic "Sympathy for the Devil". It's such a great song, and this band covers it so eloquently.

This fiery, high-energy show is truly lightning-in-a-bottle. Dana Fuchs' Live in Denmark rocks hard and is best heard at a loud volume.

For more information about Dana Fuchs, visit her website www.danafuchs.com

Mike Zito – Outside or The Eastside (Gulf Coast Records)

By Philip Smith; May 1, 2026

Original Source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



There's always an excitement in the air for me when Mike Zito releases a new album. Like Bruce Springsteen his records are masterfully written and pieced together to create a genuine album-oriented listening experience. With his latest album *Outside or the Eastside*, Zito pays homage to his hometown St. Louis, Missouri, where his beginnings as musician and songwriter are firmly rooted. Self-produced, this eleven-track album features Zito on vocals/guitar, Scot Sutherland on bass, Lewis Stephens on keys, and Matthew R. Johnson on drums.

With a tasty bit of shredding, the title-track "Outside or the Eastside" blasts the record open for a rippin' good song where Zito takes a visit to East St. Louis on a Friday night and concludes "You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here". The warm bassline and hypnotic rhythm of "Kiss You All Over" pulls me in tight for a passionate and right-to-the-point declaration of infatuation. Zito paints a gritty yet vibrant picture of the city from the viewpoint of "Grand Avenue". He brilliantly brings the scene to life with pimps, hookers, muggers, cops, and bums topped off with a namedrop to White Castle for the action going on in the parking lot. I smile at the way he poetically puts it, "There's lots to see but not much to do on Grand Avenue". Zito fiercely goes for the electric blues jugular in "Too Broke to Spend the Night". It's an amazing listen. I also love the fiery cover of the Willie Dixon-penned classic "Close to You". Like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Zito takes the song and makes it his own.

Zito has set a new bar for himself with *Outside or the Eastside*. This record lands as a personal favorite and absolutely cooks from beginning to end.

For more information about Mike Zito, visit his website at <https://www.mikezito.com/>



Bear Ryan and The Delta Snakes – Low and Slow (Independent)

By Philip Smith; March 6, 2026

Original Source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



I have a soft-spot in my inner-being for music originating down at the crossroads in **Clarksdale, Mississippi**, and the new album *Low and Slow* from **Bear Ryan & the Delta Snakes** has totally won me over. Her music hits me like an outlaw cocktail of hill-country blues splashed with dashes of rock, and country. **Bear** refers to her music as “low-fence rock-n-roll”. Recorded live-to-tape at **Matt Patton’s (Drive By Truckers) Dial Back**

Sound recording studio in **Water Valley, Mississippi**, this eight track album of all original songs cuts right to the bone. **Bear’s** talent for writing runs deep, reminding me of greats such as **Lucinda Williams**, and **Todd Snider**. With **Bear** on cigar-box guitar and lead vocals, the **Delta Snakes** are comprised of guitarist **Ryan Robertson** and bassist/keyboardist **Baxter Arender**, with harp master **Charlie Musselwhite** appearing on two tracks, and vocalist **A.J. Haynes** on one. Drummers **Sam Van Winkle**, **Ricky Burkhead**, and **BE** appear across different tracks.

I’m instantly pulled in from the git-go with a riff reminiscent of classic **Creedence Clearwater Revival** as **Bear** sings “Woman”. With a brutal honesty **Bear** confronts the misogynistic viewpoints of what it means to be a woman. I really dig “I am the Weather” with its riveting and hypnotic rhythm fronting a tale of a nineteen-year-old, mean-as-she-can-be woman with an affinity for red wine and codeine. **Robertson** puts a smile on my face as he occasionally dips his performance into a pool of psychedelia. I absolutely love “Snake Handler’s Daughter” and the way **Bear** masterfully collides the polarized worlds of **Appalachia** with **India**. The sounds of sitar provided by **Arender** add the perfect touch. The setup in “Bad Old Man” is a truly bad-ass song of revenge. Some people are so despicable, they could easily go missing without recourse. **Bear** on cigar box, joined with **Robertson’s** infectious riff and the sound of **Musselwhite** on harmonica makes for a mesmerizing and intoxicating listen. The record concludes with a hard-scrabble look at the poorest state of the union with “Mississippi Mornings”. The blues rings so true and so real as **Bear** sings of the cards that are “dealt in the buckle of the bible-belt”.

Although **Bear Ryan & the Delta Snakes’** *Low and Slow* appears to be a gumbo of genres at first, it truly is blues at its heart, and it’s the real deal. It’s one of those records where every song is a gem.

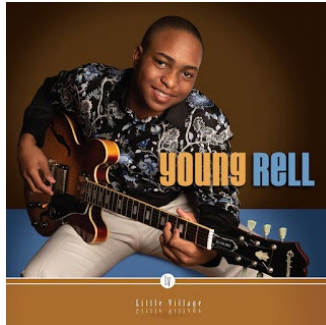
For more information about Bear Ryan and the Delta Snakes, visit

<https://www.bearryanmusic.com/>

Harrell “Young Rell” Davenport – Young Rell (Little Village Records)

By Phillip Smith; May 23, 2026

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



After seeing Harrell “Young Rell” Davenport perform earlier this month at BratGirlmedia’s All-Star Showcase at Rum Boogie Café in Memphis and at the Pinetop Boogie & Crawfish Boil held at Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale, Mississippi, I feel greatly honored to review his debut, self-titled album Young Rell. It’s artists like this nineteen-year-old singer/songwriter/harp player/guitarist from Vicksburg, Mississippi, who keep this sacred genre of music alive, and Young Rell is doing that in a classic and majestic way. Joining

Davenport in the studio for this twelve-track album, which features ten brilliant originals and two attention-grabbing covers, are Jim Pugh on organ/piano, Endre Tarczy on bass, Christopher “Kid” Andersen on guitar/rhythm guitar, DaQuantae “Q” Johnson on bass, June Core on Drums, Larry Batiste on horn arrangements/backing vocals, Aaron Lington on tenor/baritone sax, and Niel Levonius on trumpet.

With Kid Andersen on guitar and Pugh on piano, “Fatherless Child” the first single released for this album wonderfully showcases Davenport’s skills as a songwriter, singer, and harp player. This heavy and powerful story-telling blues ballad pulls tightly at my empathetic heart-strings. I love the funky, infectious groove Tarczy and Core plant on the horn-infused “Spinning”. Rell’s vocals are smooth and confident as they bring to mind the classic soul-blues of the great Johnny Rawls. “Richland Swing” is an amazing instrumental which absolutely cooks. Bountifully loaded with the sound of horns and organ, this track zeros in on Rell’s stellar talent as a guitarist. Hearing Rell’s fierce cover of Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” completely caught me off guard. It’s an incredible song with a genius, blues re-tooling. The other cover which lands on this album is a magnificent performance of Fenton Robinson’s 1977 title-track “I Hear Some Blues Downstairs”. Rell’s delivery on guitar demands attention. It is clean and downright remarkable. Riding atop an unstoppable fury of harmonica goodness, “Nite Creepin’” is an astonishing blast of instrumental blues.

This recording from Young Rell lands in my favorites of 2026, and is a recording which blues enthusiasts will surely want to hear. I’m already looking very-much forward to hearing more from Rell in the future.

For more information about Harrell “Young Rell” Davenport, visit his website at:

<https://youngrell.com/>

Beyond 1969 – Back to the Blues (Independent)

By Phillip Smith; June 6, 2026

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



For those of us who came of age in the Seventies, “Back to the Blues”, the new album from Connecticut-based blues-rockers Beyond 1969, is comfort food for the ears. Fronted by singer/songwriter/guitarist Tom Forst aka The Suit, this quartet invokes the glory days of album-oriented rock with this ten-track all-original record. The other remaining members of Beyond 1969 are Tony Delisio on bass guitar and vocals, Jeff Bousfield on keys, and Bryan Caudle on drums/percussion.

The album opens with “I’m Never Gonna Leave You” which immediately grabs me with its hypnotic rhythm, long-hanging guitar notes, and saxophone accompaniment. It hits me with a Steely Dan vibe which I absolutely love. I dig the funky groove swimming through “Comin’ Back to the Blues”. Loaded with Forst’s smoldering guitar licks, and Bousfield’s amazing keyboard mastery, this infectious track is definitely ear-worm worthy. The acoustic guitar intro on “Goin’ Down” is played with a beautiful, melancholy finesse as Forst sings this dark ballad of self-reflection.

“Back to the Blues” is a solid album from start to finish. It’s certainly worth checking out.

For more information about Beyond 1969, visit their website at <https://beyond1969.com>

Classic Blues from The Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (Smithsonian Folkways Recording)

By Phillip Smith; June 13, 2026

Original source: phillycheezeblues.blogspot.com



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has now reissued its 2003 Classic Blues compilation on vinyl, and it sounds amazing. Featuring twenty-fix blues songs recorded over a fifty-year span from 1942-1992, this double album gem delivers a diverse cross-section of the blues to the listener, covering artists such as Lead Belly, Lightnin’ Hopkins, Son House, Pink Anderson, Rev. Gary Davis, and David “Honeyboy” Edwards. The blues nerd in me greatly appreciates the inclusion of a two-sided, three-page foldout with historical notes and references for each of the tracks too. There’s some very interesting information to soak up in those pages.

The story-telling genius of Big Bill Broonzy shines bright on “Mule-Ridin’ Blues”. And to experience this on mint vinyl is a delight. I love hearing the original 1948 version of “Mercury Blues” by K.C. Douglas. I remember hearing this song for the first time in 1976 after spinning my freshly-purchased copy of Steve Miller Band’s Fly Like an Eagle. Douglas’ original is so raw and stripped down compared to all the other versions I have heard over the years, and that’s what makes this such a standout. Big Joe Williams’ “Don’t Leave Me Here”, a song he based on an earlier and more popular recording of his “Baby Please Don’t Go” lands with an instant familiarity. The Piedmont blues of Rev. Gary Davis is delightful as ever with his take on “Candy Man”, a song he claimed to have first heard at a carnival in 1905. The vintage sounds of guitarist/singer Brownie McGhee and harmonica master Sonny Terry covering “Red River Blues” with their version called “Rising Sun” is an absolute treat which was captured during a recording session in 1955. The guitar instrumental “Vastopol” from Elizabeth Cotton is a magnificent serving of acoustic blues. According to the liner notes, the song-title has roots based on the Crimean seaport Sevastopol and the open-tuning guitar term which was named after it. The album ends with a spirited duet by Lead Belly and Josh White called “Don’t Lie Buddy”, making for a bragging contest which surely cooks.

The deep-cuts and stories behind each song on these records are sure to pull the listener in for an engaging listen. I highly recommend Classic Blues from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings for every blues fan.

For more information about Smithsonian Folkways Recordings or this release, visit

<https://folkways.si.edu/classic-blues-from-smithsonian-folkways>



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TICKETS & INFO: PHILADELPHIABLUESOCIETY.ORG ★★

Innerview with Sugar Ray Norcia

by: Greg Gaughan

1. You formed Sugar Ray and The Bluetones with guitarist Ronnie Earl almost 50 years ago. How did you and Ronnie Earl meet?



My drummer Neil got a call from (Michael) “Mudcat” Ward, my bass player, who was playing with this guy Ronnie Horvath in Providence at the old Met Cafe. Neil said he was going up to play with Mudcat and Ronnie and told them about me and they said, “Bring him along.” Well, we played and it was like magic – immediately. I was playing with good guitar players prior to that, but this was better than good. Ronnie was smokin’ and we gelled – it was like a glove.

So that developed into Sugar Ray & The Bluetones

2. In 1979, you formed the original Sugar Ray and The Bluetones and became the house band at The Speakeasy Cafe in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Can you explain what it was like being a house band at that venue during that time?



We were young and ambitious. Ronnie Earl was the one who suggested that we call up some of our blues heroes and ask if we could back them up at the Speakeasy in Boston and other venues as well. It was a learning experience like none other. We played with Big Walter Horton, Otis Rush, Hubert Sumlin, J.B. Hutto, Joe Turner, Roosevelt Sykes, Buddy Guy, Jr. Wells, and many more.

3. I understand that in the early days, your band toured clubs in New York City, Washington, D.C., and throughout Virginia. Compared to touring and performing today, what was that experience like in the beginning vs. touring today?

It was great. Sometimes we would pile into a 1959 Chevy wagon loaded to the hilt, or even an old converted telephone van owned by our piano player, Anthony Geraci. Today if we tour it usually involves an overseas flight and a European tour manager.

4. What was it like for you, as a harmonica player, to have the opportunity to play at Theresa's Lounge, in Chicago, with Junior Wells? Did your band open for Junior Wells or did your band back Junior Wells that night?



We found our way to the club and were stopped at the door. We looked kind of suspicious being five white guys wearing berets. Jr Wells was there performing and noticed us. He recognized us because he played with us in Boston, so he told the doorman to let us in. He put a \$50 bill on the bar and told the bartender to take care of us. We all ended up playing a few tunes together. We were treated kindly. Theresa herself offered us a steady gig on Tuesday nights but of course, we had to respectfully decline.

5. I read that your band got to record two albums with the great Chicago harmonica player, Big Walter Horton. How did that all come about?



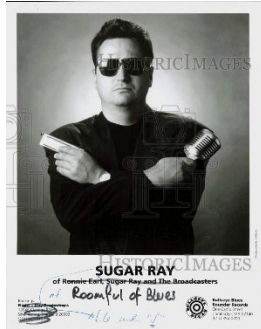
When we were supporting him on our little tours, someone recorded us at The Knickerbocker in Westerly, RI. It's a bootleg recording. None of us were asked permission, and no one got paid, but it's fortunate to have been captured live with Walter. Another little club in Westerly, RI, where we were recorded live was The Bocce Club. If you look at the cover of that album that is me and my wife dancing in front of Big Walter and Johnny Nicholas.

6. I understand that Sugar Ray and The Bluetones were one of this generation's first blues bands to tour Europe. What was that experience like for you and your band, and do you have any interesting stories to share about playing in Europe?

We were among the first to venture over to Europe. Of course, it was exciting and life-changing for all of us. We were young and inexperienced. We hauled all of our gear to the airport, including amps and drums. Everything! When we arrived, we had to hail three cabs to carry all of our stuff around. What a challenge that was but we made it work. When we got to our first gig, we realized that our amps would not work because the electric currents and plugs are different than in America! We rushed out and bought some sort of electric converter so we could plug in. Fun, fun, fun.

7. I understand you joined the band Roomful of Blues in the 1990's, touring and recording with the band. How did that opportunity arise? And, what became of Sugar Ray and The Bluetones during that time?

The Bluetones had to take a hiatus for a while.



I have to say that I used to sit in with Roomful of Blues down at The Knickerbocker quite often when I was young. It was kind of hard to get their attention 'cause, you know, Duke (Robillard) was up there. This was one of the original configurations of Roomful and they were smokin' hot, backing up people like Sil Austin and Red Prysock, Cleanhead Vinson and Joe Turner, so for me to ask to sit in it was like – "maybe next week" – but once in a while I did get the opportunity and I caught their ears. I said to myself, "Someday...man, oh, man, I love this horn section stuff." And that someday came in 1991. Greg Piccolo called me up and told me, "We have a long tour coming up, going out to California, and we're going to be recording out there in Pat Benatar's studio and her husband Neil Giraldo would be producing. Are you interested?" Um...YEAH! What took you so long? But I asked why and Greg told me that as they were going to make this album, the band decided they wanted a stronger vocalist. Duke was gone by this time. Ronnie Earl had been in the band and he was gone as well. So I said, "Yeah, I'll do it – when do we leave?" and it was like, next Thursday! Greg said come to town and I'll give you some material, and man, it was a lot of stuff! It was tapes – cassette tapes – multiple tapes filled with stuff I was supposed to learn and, so, it wasn't easy. My first gig was a big gig out in San Francisco or somewhere. But I pulled it off and then we did make a recording at Benatars studio which never came out. But it was cool. Pat Benatar was coming in and out of the studio...

9. How many albums has Sugar Ray & The Bluetones put out since forming almost 50 years ago?

Well, it's about 11 albums under the name Sugar Ray and the Bluetones and many, many more other collaborations of course.

10. When Sugar Ray and The Bluetones decide to put an album out, can you walk us through that process and what it looks like from start to completion? (i.e. coming up with the songs, the arrangements, the recording process, etc.)

I get inspired when I know there is a recording in the wings coming up. I usually come up with an idea, of some sort. Sometimes it's a song title or maybe a catchy phrase or riff. Then the

band gets together and usually each band member contributes their "two cents ". We may or may not have the opportunity to actually play the new song out live on a stage but when we get to the studio, we may fine tune the song and go over it once or twice and then we record. Most of the time we nail it on the first try.

11. What style of harmonica do you prefer to play, Diatonic or Chromatic?



I play both but mostly Diatonic.

12. How, or when, do you decide which style of harmonica to use on a particular song when recording a new album?

That is usually figured out during the writing process, but sometimes I may experiment in the moment as we are actually recording. A lot of the beauty of blues music is the spontaneity of it all.

13. What brand of harmonicas do you prefer to play?

I mostly play a Marine Band model 1896.



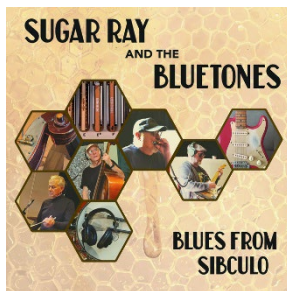
14. In September 2020, Sugar Ray and The Bluetones released the album, "Too Far from The Bar" featuring Little Charlie Baty on guitar. How did you and Charlie Baty originally meet? What's the story behind the title track, "Too Far from The Bar"? And, how much of a shock was it to you and your band, as it was for the rest of the blues community, to learn of Charlie Baty's passing from a heart attack in March 2020?



I met Charlie officially out in California when I did some harmonica Blowout tours with Mark Hummel. We hit it off immediately both musically and personally. We decided that someday we should record together. A lot of musicians say that to each other but Charlie and I actually made it happen. Too Far from The Bar was one of those personal pet peeves that I have about not getting waited on in a timely manner or not getting proper respect because we were "just musicians". I once ordered a fine cognac for myself at a fancy bar after our gig. The bartender realized that I was in the band and poured my drink back into the bottle. I told him that I had plenty of money but he refused to serve me anyway. Lucky for him, I'm not a violent man. Ha!

So sad to have lost Charlie. He had told me he was not feeling well but he agreed to go on a European tour with The Bluetones nonetheless. He struggled through the rigorous touring but i think he had the time of his life. Not long after we returned home, I heard of his passing.

15. Your band recently released the album, "Blues from Sibculo", in November of 2025. Is this album a "live" album or a studio album? If it's a "live" album, where was it recorded in Sibculo, The Netherlands, and if it's a studio album, how did that opportunity come about to record this album in a studio in Sibculo, in The Netherlands? And, how long ago was it recorded?



It was recorded live but in a studio setting. We had a couple of days off on our tour and Rusty Zinn was our guitar player. I love Rusty. The opportunity came about and through word of mouth we heard about a nice studio in Sibculo. We jumped at the chance to record with Rusty. That was in 2025. We put down ten songs.

16. Sugar Ray and The Bluetones have been nominated for multiple awards over the years, including three Grammy Nominations, 22 Blues Music Award Nominations, plus winning two awards as well. You personally have played on over sixty Blues recordings including being a featured vocalist on two of those recordings. What do you take away from having these honors bestowed upon you and your band?

Well, like they say it is an honor just to be nominated and we have plenty of them. The real gratification comes from possibly making a positive impact on someone's life. There were many, many times that someone told me how my music got them through some personal struggles or lifted their spirits. One time I was walking through the audience singing and playing and i noticed a very pregnant woman so i walked up and played my harmonica right up to her belly. I found out later that they named their child Ray. Now that's cool!

17. What does the future hold for Sugar Ray and The Bluetones?



Probably keep playing. I'm playing with a real fine guitar player right now. His name is Tom Ferraro and he is the "go-to" guy around New England. He is sought after by a lot of musicians and he is a wonderful person as well. How important that is! I just turned 72, so I'll probably keep playing until I can't move.



THE PHILADELPHIA BLUES SOCIETY

2ND ANNUAL PHILADELPHIA BLUES FESTIVAL

★ SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026 ★

— NOON – 7PM —

📍 TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
AMBLER CAMPUS THEATRE
580 MEETINGHOUSE RD
AMBLER, PA

— HEADLINER —

SUGAR RAY & THE BLUETONES

★ THE KELLI BAKER BAND
★ STEVE GUYGER & THE EXCELLOS
★ ONE DIME BAND
★ DEBRA DEVI
★ THE WENDY LOGAN BAND
★ GARRY COGDELL

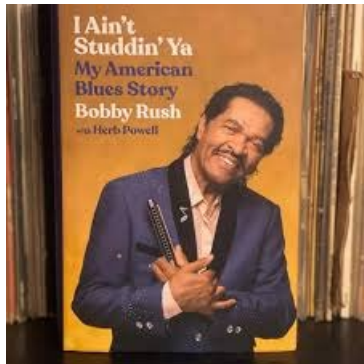
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BLUES BOOK CORNER
by Kathryn Gregoire

I Ain't Studdin' Ya: My American Blues Story

by Bobby Rush with Herb Powell



“I Ain’t Studdin’ Ya” (2021) was a big hit with the Blues Book Club members. The

book is 280 pages of fast-paced, thoughtful, entertaining “little country” stories. It was a fun way to learn about Bobby Rush, his blues world, and the many musicians who were his friends at some point during his 70-plus years of playing blues music.

As for the title of the book, go to pages 200-201 for a down-home explanation of the phrase which is the title of his 1991 album. To me, it translates to “I ain’t payin’ you no mind (because you don’t deserve it).”

Born Emmett Ellis Jr. in Homer, Louisiana, Bobby Rush moved with his guitar and harp to Chicago by way of Memphis in the 1960s, eventually returning in 1983 to his beloved South, settling down in Jackson, MS.

An amazingly energetic, straight-forward, talented man, he went from being a primary school dropout to performing on the college lecture circuit. While building his music career, Rush supported himself and his family with a thriving BBQ business. He developed himself into the consummate performer, storyteller, singer, songwriter, guitarist, harmonica player, entertainer and businessman.

His shows have the combined flavors of Vaudeville, Las Vegas and Juke Joints. Book club member Hank Imhoff describes Bobby Rush. “Yeah, he’s an entertainer and musician all in one. Has a real good time in what he does.” Bobby Rush credits the Martin Scorsese’s 2003 documentary film *I Ain’t Studdin’ Ya: My American Blues Story* by Bobby Rush with Herb Powell series, *The Blues*, as introducing him to the world as the star in episode 3, *The Road to Memphis*. The series originally aired on PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) in the United States. Following the series, Bobby Rush traveled extensively abroad, and became the first blues artist to play on the Great Wall of China.

Receiving long-awaited recognition, Rolling Stones

named Bobby Rush “King of the Chitlin’ Circuit,” which meant a lot to him. The title follows him around, including on the side of his tour bus. Bobby Rush loves being on the road and is still out there 200 nights a year, even though he is in his late 80s. In 2016, Daniel Cross released a film, I Am the Blues, about blues musicians touring the Chitlin’ Circuit featuring Bobby Rush, which the Blues Book Club members watched and discussed. It starred Bobby Rush which gave us an excellent opportunity to see him in action and to get a sense of his warm and friendly personality.

Another opportunity to learn about Bobby Rush’s music came when Hank Imhoff sang “Let Me In our House” from the 2020 Rower than Raw album on his recently acquired 1934 Gibson L 50. He demonstrated for us how Bobby Rush uses only a little background music from a drum machine to produce a clean, raw sound – “That’s all he needs.” Rower than Raw won the 2021 Blues Music Award for the best Acoustic Blues Album.

Rush says the road is where he does most of his writing. He

has recorded over 400 songs, many of them his own originals. A multiple-award winner, he received 12 Blues Music Awards and 6 Grammy Nominations. He is a Blues Hall of Famer and a recent recipient of the highest Blues Music Award, B.B. King Entertainer of the Year. He reports drinking twice in his life, once with Muddy Waters in the early 60s, and once toasting his first Grammy Award (Porcupine Meat Album) in 2017 with champagne.

While he is grateful for his many awards, he speaks highly of his family, friends, fans and fellow musicians and considers his biggest success in life to be his relationships, which are many and deep.

A side of Bobby Rush not often seen by the public is his generosity to his community. He contributes to combat Sickle Cell anemia, works to get people out to vote and provides for the next generation of musicians in school bands. He has entertained soldiers in Iraq and housed families who lost their homes in Katrina.

Much to his surprise, the Mississippi legislature passed Senate Resolution 43, “A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE CAREER AND HUMANITARIANISM OF

NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY
KNOWN BLUES SINGER MR. BOBBY
RUSH.”

The BSCP Blues Book Club
meets on Zoom the third Monday
of the month from 11 am – 1 pm. To
participate, please email:
bluesmunga@gmail.com



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AUGUST 11-14, 2026
Full Moon Resort • Big Indian, New York

UPCOMING CONCERTS at the HOME of the PHILADELPHIA BLUES SOCIETY
Jamey's House of Music...and other blues happenings at other places!

Saturday, July 4th – Emanuel Casablamca – Jamey's House of Music.

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

*A show in honor of our veterans. *

Saturday, July 11th – James "JB Brown - Jamey's House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"It's gonna be a rockin' Blues Show!"

Thursday, July 16th – "Just Guitars" Podcast recording featuring Erin Harpe and Jim Countryman

Jamey's House of Music – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"Some of the best country blues you'll ever hear!"

Friday, July 17th – Jackson Taylor Blues Co. – Jamey's House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"Walter Trout is honored to have Jackson Taylor tour & play a little guitar too"

Saturday, July 18th – Bobby Messano, Dave Uosikkinen, & Kenny Aaronson

Jamey's House of Music – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"When these three musicians get together on the same stage...it's MAGIC!"

Thursday, July 23rd – AC Steel and The Perpetrators – Jamey's House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

Friday, July 24th – Debra Devi – Jamey's House of Music – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"Every Stage Becomes a Blues Playground."

Thursday, July 30th – Alex Kilroy and The Kelli Baker Band – Jamey's House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"Alex is well-known guitarist back home in Romania as one of best guitarist. The Kelli Baker Band infuses her Blues with a little May West."

Saturday, August 1st – Bee's Deluxe – Jamey's House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

"Some of the best Blues out of Boston soaked in acid."

Thursday, August 6th – The Philadelphia Blues Society presents Joe Becton's Acoustic Blues
Jamey's House of Music – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Harmonica-driven Blues by one of Philadelphia's finest Blues musicians."

Friday, August 21st – Brad Vicker and The Vestapolitans along with the Mikey Junior Band
32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Harmonia-driven and sax-driven Blues."

Thursday, September 1st – The Philadelphia Blues Society presents Steve Shanahan and his Blues Band
Jamey's House of Music – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Texas-Blues!"

Friday, September 11th – Slim & The South Street Hustle – Jamey's House of Music
32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
come support one of our own, who once again is taking his band to compete at the IBC in Memphis in 2027, representing the Billtown Blues Association. Congratulations to Slim and his bandmates!

Saturday, September 12th - Swing That Cat – Jamey's House of Music
32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Swingin' Blues and Jazz...it will take you back...it'll move you!"

Friday, September 18th – Alex Lopez – Jamey's House of Music
32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Muddy Waters wasn't just playing the blues when he sang, "The had a baby, and they named the baby Rock n' Roll – he was predicting the future."

Saturday, September 19th – Brother John (Johnny Never & John Colgan-Davis)
Jamey's House of Music – 32 S, Lansdown Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Piedmont and Delta Blues"

Saturday, September 26th – Bluestime – Jamey's House of Music
32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"Rockin' Blues!"

Thursday, October 1st – The Philadelphia Blues Society presents AN INTIMATE ACOUSTIC EVENING with MARIA MULDAUR (with pianist Bruce Katz)
Jamey's House of Music – 32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA
"A special intimate acoustic concert featuring a fun repertoire of Naughty Bawdy Blues & Swingin' Syncopatin' Jazz tunes from the '20s & '30s"

Thursday, October 8th – The Claudettes – Jamey’s House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

“**NPR MUSIC:** Chicago’s original recipe band...The Claudettes sonic playing field is the blues and everything after, all tastefully and artfully blended together.

Perhaps the band’s greatest super power: songwriting.

Friday, October 9th - The Outcrops – Jamey’s House of Music

32 S. Lansdowne Ave. Lansdowne, PA

“blends Blues, Americana and Blues-Rock!”

Saturday, October 10th - The Philadelphia Blues Society 2nd Annual Blues Festival

Temple University, Ambler Campus

580 Meetinghouse Road, Ambler, PA 19002



2ND ANNUAL
PHILADELPHIA
BLUES FESTIVAL

★ **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026** ★

NOON – 7PM

📍 **TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
AMBLER CAMPUS THEATRE
580 MEETINGHOUSE RD
AMBLER, PA**

HEADLINER
**SUGAR RAY
& THE BLUETONES**

FEATURING

- ★ THE KELLI BAKER BAND
- ★ STEVE GUYGER & THE EXCELLOS
- ★ ONE DIME BAND
- ★ DEBRA DEVI
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Twisted Tail – visit <https://thetwistedtail.com/> to find out when your favorite blues band is playing this Philadelphia Blues landmark.

The Sellersville Theatre – visit www.st94.org/upcoming-shows to see which blues bands are playing, and when.

The Fallser Club – visit <https://thefallserclub.org/> to see what blues bands are coming to this East Falls venue

The Lansdowne Theatre – visit <https://brepresents.com/> to see when a blues band/artist will be rollin' through.

If you are a musician and looking for a jam session, check out the following:

- *Monday Night – Gypsy Joe Alves Blues Jam at The Burger Bar – Northeast Philadelphia
- *Tuesday Night – There are two blues jams! In Doylestown, PA it's happenin' at the Villa Capri Pizzeria, hosted by The Little Red Rooster Blues Band and in Wilmington, DE at the 4W5 at the Reef hosted by the 4W5 Blues Band fronted by Harmonica Slim.
- *Wednesday Night – The Crooked Eye Blues Band host the Wednesday Night Jam
- *Thursday Night – There are two blues jams! Mikey Jr. hosts the Blues Jam at Havan's in New Hope, PA and Steve Guyger & Filthy Rich host the blues jam at the Temperance House in Newtown, PA
- *Sunday – The Twisted Tail in Philadelphia features the Blues that brings in the tourist and the dancers

Sundays at Jamey's House of Music!
It's Blues, Blues, and nothin', but the Blues!

Each Sunday, a different house band, kicks off the Blues Jam at 12pm and gets the crowd in the groove for when the jammers take the stage from 1pm to 3pm.

If you're a musician...bring your instrument, singers included. Everyone is welcome to attend, even if you're just coming for the music, food and drink.

Visit www.jameyshouseofmusic.com to see which house band is playing which Sunday.

Camino Farms - Healthy Food for Those in Need

by: Stephen Shanahan

You hear a lot in the news, social media and other publications about the price of beef, the shortage of healthy foods and a society that leaves its most vulnerable at risk. Camino Farms, and Camp Camino, located in Barto, PA, have a mission to help those in Southeast Pennsylvania eat better and assist those in need.

Conceived by husband and wife, Katie and Pierce Keating, their ten adult children, spouses and grandchildren, have created a place where abundance and giving are the rule rather than the exception. Located in the historic Butter Valley of Berks County, the former Schultz Farm (c. 1844) now the 200-acre Camino Farms, has been transformed over the past 4 years into a working cattle farm of approximately 100 acres and a camp. The farm's goal is to provide protein in the form of beef, chicken and eggs to the local food banks in Southeast Pennsylvania.

Pierce explains, "Having been blessed with so much, Katie and I thought about starting an orphanage. Since the public sector had long taken over foster care, we turned our attention to providing food and helping those less fortunate. After visiting a friend's farm as guests, and much discussion, we purchased the property with the intent to run a camp for disabled and disadvantaged children and to work the land for food. Neither of us has any experience in farming!"

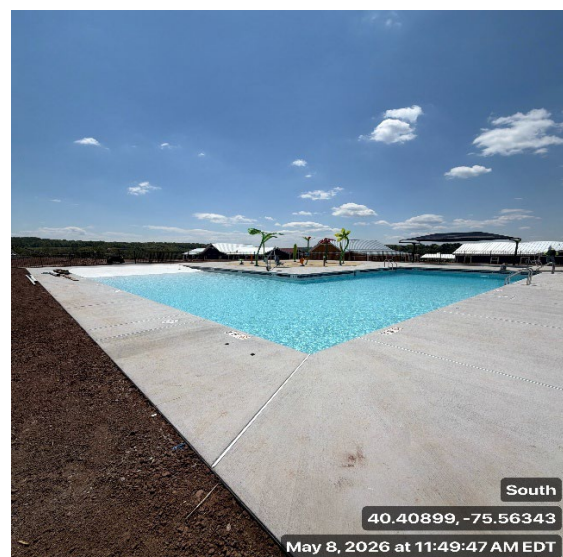
After investigating the top needs of local food banks, the Keatings decided to raise cattle, chickens and eggs since natural, protein-rich food was found to be in short supply. After onboarding a farm manager, the team has set a goal of raising 100 head of cattle and about 4,000 chickens (layers and roasters). The goal for 2027 is to donate 20,000 pounds of organic beef, 20,000 pounds of chicken and 150,000 eggs (12,500 dozen!), to food pantries in Montgomery and Chester counties.

Farm manager, Baylor Lansden, reports that in 2026, the first year of operation, the farm contributed 24,000 eggs (2,040 dozen), 13,716 pounds of chicken and 1,573 pounds of beef. Local food banks receiving the food include Garden of Health (Montgomery County), Open Link (Pennsburg), Access, Martha's Pantry

and Preston's Pantry. Camino Farms, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, donates all of the food.

The Keatings' other ministry is the operation of the newly constructed Camp Camino right next door to Camino Farm. The camp is also a 501(c)(3) organization that provides summer camp for young people challenged by disabilities and economic circumstances during the summer and retreats for groups during the 9-month off-season. As a faith-based organization, Camp Camino provides a bucolic setting for 80 campers and 20 caregivers in newly constructed, fully ADA-compliant facilities. These facilities include sports (a pool, splash park, basketball, pickleball) crafts, and activities tailored to the needs of the weekly camping groups.

Further information is available at Camino Farms | Experience Growth - Book Your Visit - <https://www.caminofarmspa.org/> - "Everything Here Grows Together"



The Philadelphia Blues Society supports Camino Farms and Camp in their efforts in bringing healthy food for Those in Need along with offering a learning experience that's fun, something for the community.

In Memoriam

by: Greg Gaughan

Bobby Murray (June 9, 1953 – April 30, 2026)



Bobby Murray was an American electric blues guitarist, songwriter and record producer who played in Etta James' backing band for 23 years, performed on three Grammy Award winning recordings with James and B. B. King and released four solo albums. In 2011, the Detroit Blues Society granted Murray their Lifetime Achievement Award. Murray led his own band in Metro

Detroit and won several Detroit Music Awards. His last solo recording, *Love Letters from Detroit*, was released in 2021 and was granted the Outstanding Blues Recording of the Year at the Detroit Music Awards. *Love Letters from Detroit* and the title track, "Love Letter", is a song written by Murray and his wife about Etta James and him playing with her. His guitar playing was mainly influenced by Albert Collins and B. B. King. Murray latterly resided in White Lake, Michigan, United States.

Kenny Windle (March 16, 1952 – May 7, 2028)



Kenny Windle was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, grew up in North Philly where he loved playing "half-ball" or "exploring" abandoned warehouses. In his 20's, he apprenticed at Fosters Restoration in Philadelphia where he learned the craft of auto-restoration and ultimately restored vintage vehicles/race cars at restoration shops and for his own business Stewart

Restorations. His work won awards at Radford Hunt, Pennsylvania, Amelia Island, Florida, and at the Pebble Beach Concourse d'Elegance, California He was truly gifted in his craft and refused to sacrifice his workmanship standards.

Kenny's true creative passion was music. He spent over 40 years in bands developing a soulful guitar style, full of rhythm and space, played from the heart with complete abandon. As he liked to say, "Rock 'n Roll should be just a little bit dangerous." Kenny spent many years touring the East Coast with bands including Yawa, Red House, Sixteen and Cherry. He recorded with The Rave through Star Productions, and later gained label interest from Philly International with the funk/punk/soul-laced band Spankeyalbo.

Later in his musical career Kenny went to an audition for Newark band The Condors, where he met his wife. For over 20 years they performed together, playing at regional festivals, benefits, and music venues. In 2013, just after they married, the couple took a "Rock 'N Roll Honeymoon" to Memphis, TN where their band "Gretchen Emery and Dirty Boots" competed in the International Blues Challenge. They later formed The Gretchen Emery Band and released three albums of Kenny and Gretchen's their original music (recorded at FAME Studios, Muscle Shoals, AL, and at Barn Sound Studio, Chester Springs, Pennsylvania).

Kenny was straightforward and unambiguous. He had a "never met a stranger" openness that drew people to hang out with "the guy with the cool blue glasses." He told crazy, hysterical stories of his life in rock-n-roll and of a challenging childhood North Philly. What was the common thread? Kenny Windle was unapologetically his own person, true to his internal North Star.

Willie James "Blood" Ulmer (February 8, 1940 – June 3, 2026)



Willie James Ulmer was born in St. Matthews, South Carolina, United States on February 8, 1940. He began his career playing with soul jazz ensembles, first in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 1959 to 1964, and then in the Columbus, Ohio, area from 1964 to 1967. He recorded with organist Hank Marr in 1964 (released 1967). After moving to New York in 1971, Ulmer played with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Joe Henderson, Paul Bley, Rashied Ali, and Larry Young.

His appearance on Arthur Blythe's two consecutive Columbia albums, *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* (1979) and *Illusions* (1980), was followed by Ulmer's signing to that label. That resulted in three albums: *Free Lancing*, *Black Rock*, and *Odyssey*, which was the inaugural release of Odyssey the Band with drummer Warren Benbow and violinist Charles Burnham. The trio was called "avant-gutbucket" by music critic Bill Milkowski to describe the music as "conjuring images of Skip James and Albert Ayler jamming on the Mississippi Delta."

Ulmer has recorded as a leader, including [blues](#)-oriented albums produced by [Vernon Reid](#): *Memphis Blood*, *No Escape from the Blues*, *Bad Blood in the City*, and *Birthright*.

Ulmer died in Manhattan on June 3, 2026, at the age of 86.

Clive Davis (April 4, 1932 – June 22, 2026)



Controversial, ruthless and staggeringly successful, Clive Davis, who has died aged 94, was the most complete specimen of the old-school record industry mogul. Where his competitors might have enjoyed one or two periods of power and influence, Davis kept bouncing back over decades with fresh projects and new approaches to the music business. Though temporarily floored by financial scandals during the 1970s, Davis refused to be beaten and never lost his gift for creating chart-busting artists.

Above all, it was Davis's discovery and promotion of Whitney Houston that cemented his reputation as a man with an almost supernatural gift for talent-spotting. Her 1985 debut album was the result of Davis's careful nurturing and planning, and became what was then the bestselling debut by any female artist. She went on to enjoy colossal international success, and was credited with opening doors for many African-American artists.

Davis's first signing, in 1966, was the Scottish folk-rock singer Donovan, who repaid the investment with the chart-topping Sunshine Superman. Then, visiting the Monterey pop festival in 1967 on behalf of Columbia Records, Davis seized the opportunity to sign some of the leading lights of the rock revolution, notably Janis Joplin and her band Big Brother and the Holding Company. He later described his attendance at Monterey as "the creative turning point in my life".

The Davis era at Columbia was distinguished by the acquisition of a remarkable number of top-selling pedigree acts, which included Chicago, Blood Sweat & Tears, Earth Wind & Fire and Aerosmith (whose 1979 song No Surprise included the line "then old Clive Davis said / He's surely gonna make us a star"), as well as the singer-songwriters Laura Nyro and Billy Joel.

Lynn Anderson's (I Never Promised You a) Rose Garden became an international smash in 1970 after Davis insisted it should be released as a single, and the seeds of the immense career of Bruce Springsteen were sown when he signed with Columbia in 1972. Davis had the foresight to back Springsteen when many of his colleagues remained skeptical about him. The New York Times magazine described him as "the most powerful man in the recording industry".