

# TORONTO BLUES SOCIETY MAPLEBLUES

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

December 2020

[www.torontobluessociety.com](http://www.torontobluessociety.com)

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Alana Bridgewater will co-host the Toronto segment of the (virtual) Maple Blues Awards along with Johnny Max

Doc MacLean Out of Africa  
Holiday Gift Guide  
Loose Blues News

Blues Reviews  
Blues Events  
and More

CANADIAN PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT #40011871

# TORONTO BLUES SOCIETY

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## THIS DECEMBER GIVE THE GIFT OF MUSIC!

With the end of the year and holiday season quickly  
approaching, you can gift that blues fan in your life with  
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The Toronto Blues Society is a non-profit and a  
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able to continue to present emerging artists and put  
home-grown performers in the spotlight.

Thank you for all your continued support!

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### Attention TBS Members!

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

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## Blues and Anti-Black Racism

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

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

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

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Raha Javanfar & Regent Park School of Music Students** Maple Blues Awards Performance on TBS Youtube channel  
Wednesday, December 9 | 6pm (EST)

**TBS Annual General Meeting** on Zoom  
Tuesday, December 15 | 7pm (EST)

**Layla Zoe** CD Premiere  
"Nowhere Left To Go"  
Wednesday, January 6 | 8pm (EST)

February, 2021  
**24th Maple Blues Awards, Virtual**  
Every Monday throughout February 2021 starting with Toronto on Mon, Feb 1st. Mark your calendar Feb 8, 15, and 22 as well for live streams from Ottawa, Vancouver and Montreal.



CBC Radio One (99.1)  
*Saturday Night Blues*,  
w/ **Holger Petersen** (national)  
Saturday 9:05pm-11:00pm  
(on Radio 2 Saturday at 6:05pm),



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



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



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

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



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



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



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



CFFF Trent Radio (92.7 FM)  
*Blues Themes*, Delivered by...The Milkman.  
Every Thursday night 9 to 10 PM

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

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

CFRU (93.3 FM)  
*The Thrill is Back* with **Andy and Andrew** Mondays 1 to 3pm  
*The Blues Review*, with **Roopen Majithia** Tues 9:00 pm (Guelph)

CANOE FM (100.9 FM) [canoe.fm.com](http://canoe.fm.com)  
*Buckslide Blues Cruise* with Patrick Monaghan Tues. (7-9pm)  
(Haliburton)

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

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

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



Raha Javanfar



Layla  
Zoe

# Tune in to TBS Virtual events

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

**Layla Zoe CD Premiere**  
“Nowhere Left To Go”  
Wednesday, January 6 | 8pm (EST)

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

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



Maple Blues Band

# Africa Part One

*Doc MacLean has been a beloved fixture on the Toronto Blues Scene for decades. If he wasn't playing gigs, he was busking on the street but mostly he was off on marathon tours including four rounds in South Africa, from which he sends these recollections and observations. Like everyone, his touring schedule was disrupted this year, but you can follow his adventures on his Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/DocMacLean](http://www.facebook.com/DocMacLean), [deltablues](http://deltablues) and [www.ngangablues.blogspot.com](http://www.ngangablues.blogspot.com)*

On the Blues Highway, you never know when or where you are going to wake up, find yourself, or lose your way. This rusted guitar, these silver strings, this coffee, that bed, those barking dogs, what manner of strange messages relayed on the night wind. Unexplained bruises across my neck and shoulder. Her dreadlocks pleasantly rough, and erotic, against my skin.

In my notebook: What It Takes to Get (Water). Line up your buckets. Maybe today a jojo will come. Open mouths for the waterman. Waiting for rain. Waiting for the rainmakers to come and fill our hearts. It's not just the water we crave. It's not just the water.

Here: in Africa: the Blues Highway finds its way through the mud and the dust, around the potholes, the robot vendors, the crazy taxis, stray animals, and lost souls. The rewards: hanging in the air, hiding in the horizon, waiting in the dusky clouds. For the finding and for the catching. Rainbows. Maybe.

As a young man I was gifted my music by the grandchildren of slaves. And the music: actually the smallest part of the gift—just a simple vehicle for the journey I was to embark upon. When Son House paced back and forth in his small, Rochester living room, when he achieved freedom, when he rolled his eyes back in his head: when we entered a trance like state— and he carried me to places beyond the body— neither of us touched an instrument, counted changes, or required a special amp. In my world, blues is a spiritual passage, not a genre. Mouth to ear. Heart to heart. An unrecordable human pulse extending beyond memory, perhaps beyond time. What would Son, or Sam Chatmon, or Robert Pete Williams, think of this return to Africa? I'm never sure of exactly what it is that I'm carrying with me, or how to best address and honour the ancestors.



Under a dry black rain I witness the burning of the sugar, the levelling of the fields. The roar of the flames. In KwaZulu-Natal, singers—hidden by the tall cane— carve sweetness from this place. Words I don't understand, set free in the talking wind: words landing around me pretending to be soot instead of silver messengers. From a glittering reception at the Canadian High Commission in Pretoria, I've drifted south into the City of Gold, through the Townships. Cold beer and smileys, folding chairs and hugs— these giving way to small, ticketed theatres in Free State, and then to the raw, spook'n diesel shebeens of the Durban coast. I'm here to meet the Zulu king. But that is another story. Meanwhile, sixty shows on my schedule: no venue too large, small, grand, or humble. Two guitars and a small PA system fill the entire vehicle.

*Yini le ndawo*— what is this place? Under the radar, I've plunged from one hemisphere into another. Here, my guitar is rusting in the humidity, and I am finding that my songs are no longer my own. They, too, are drifting. At the filling station, Drake is lamenting across the overhead speakers. And I Wonder about this first world, glossy culture pouring down over these struggling nations, my pump jockies, dancing as they work. What voices are diminished? How loud do you need to be, to peel it back? Drake and Bieber. I want to hear Black Coffee. I want to hear Cape to Cairo. Rodriguez could raise a Cold Fact or two, for me, this morning.

Cellphone? In this place my cellphone might be worth a year's wages. A year of hard labour in the burning fields. Cut the cane by hand, and carry it on your back. People die over phones like the one in my pocket. The

men who walk by the roadside are trim and muscular. Those sitting by the robots are old and broken.

I edge my battered Toyota onto the South African Hwy 61. It's a wild road that runs from the Wild Coast into the Great Karoo. Not a road that you might want to be on alone, in a car full of gear, without a spare, as I am. Stripped down wrecks litter the ditches and remind me: don't hook a wheel into the shoulder, watch for potholes, watch for cows and taxis. Watch. And be careful. Watch where you stop. Watch. Except when it's too dry, it always seems to rain across the hills of the Transkei. Mists shroud the lands where Mandela played as a boy. And there are many Mandelas, in this place where everyone has a true story, where having and having not can define everything or nothing at all.

I am the different one here, the white one, the one who's name cannot be pronounced correctly in isiXhosa. I could've been on the marginally better national highway, but I've chosen this track again. Twisting and turning through small villages that don't appear on maps, towns where it is always market day, places where road signs are rare and posted in languages I don't understand. Every couple of hours I bribe the police to overlook crimes that I have not committed. Everyone is patient in the game, and I'm later told that I pay too much. You don't want to spoil the police. Still, I am the different one, and this feeling is a lesson experienced, and then not forgotten. Not forgotten as the sun sets, and I move on, alone, into the watching darkness.

Africa blues: Nganga Blues Tour. N'Ganga, the healer. After five years of deserts and

*cont'd on p 6*

jungle, theatres and townships, I've arrived at Sharp Street Studios, Cape Town. Not stranded, not lost. Rather, I'm here in a place of finding and seeking: a place where the notes of a tuning can go without names, a place where you can still find mbiras tuned to the voices of the villages in which they were made. Old mbiras, their hard wood smelling of the rondavels where they first told their stories by firelight: their sides spot polished by the hard hands that held them and loved them, their voices at once clear, muffled, close and distant. Sounds that ripple off of their steel tongues: floating in the night air with the ancestors.

And now: the movement of feet, the rolling of the bones: I'm in a place where a song is a gathering of things that both ask and tell.

Rising traditional star Lungiswa Plaatjies and I are finding and seeking stories: my steel guitar, her bow, kalimba, and pan pipes. Willem Moller, the Rodriguez bandleader in *Searching for Sugarman*, catches our notes as they float past. Albert Frost holds the Fender talking sticks that repeat my story for the ears beyond the walls. And it's a sweet session today. Mandela Day. Africa Blues: the voices of each note still telling of the villages in which each of us were born, still remembering the long walk, and still offering us the hope of a rainbow.

- Doc MacLean



*This month's recommended listening by Greg Torrington, programmer of Stingray's blues channels.*

**Lisa Mills** *The Triangle* Melody Place/BMG  
**Wide Mouth Mason** *I Wanna Go With You* We Are Busy Bodies  
**Bywater Call** *Bywater Call* Gypsy Soul Records  
**The Smoke Wagon Blues Band** *The Ballad Of Albert Johnson* Independent  
**Tami Neilson** *Chickaboom!* Outside Music  
**Durham County Poets** *Hand Me Down Blues* Borealis  
**Mark May** *Deep Dark Demon* Gulf Coast  
**The Mystix** *Can't Change It* WNS  
**Crooked Eye Tommy** *Hot Coffee And Pain* Blue Heart  
**Savoy Brown** *Ain't Done Yet* Quarto Valley  
**Robert Cray** *That's What I Heard* Thirty Tigers  
**Darrell Scott** *Sings the Blues of Hank Williams* Soundly Music  
**The Betty Fox Band** *Peace in Pieces* Foxycavanagh  
**The Forrest McDonald Band** *Blues in a Bucket* WTR  
**Matchedash Parish** *Saturday Night* Make It Real  
**John Primer & Bob Corritore** *The Gypsy Woman Told Me* VizzTone  
**Tinsley Ellis** *Ice Cream in Hell* Alligator  
**Whitney Shay** *Stand Up!* Ruf  
**Casey Hensley** *Good As Gone* VizzTone  
**Bad Luck Woman & Her Misfortunes** *Cruel Thing* Independent

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FACE MASKS

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# Blues Lover's Mini Gift Guide

In lieu of our traditional "Gift Guide" we have asked some friends and contributors for suggestions of CDs that would make a great gift for a blues fan:

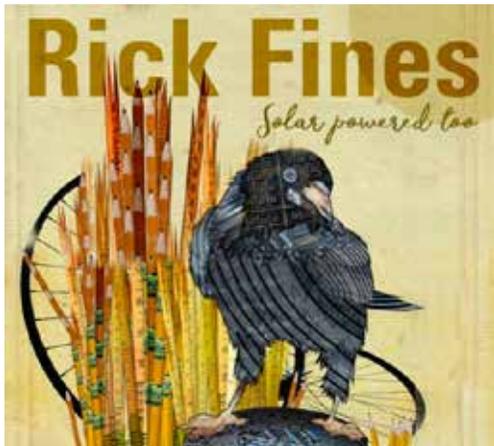
**Terry Parsons** writes

"I have had so much amazing music pass through my shows this year it is hard to single it out in just 5 songs... and One Discovery... BUT here goes;

Canadian:

Rick Fines - Solar Powered Too

Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar - The Reckless One



- International:
- The Bluesbones - Live on Stage (Belgium)
- Eliza Neals - Black Crow Moan (USA)
- Thorbjørn Risager & The Black Tornado - Come On In (Denmark)
- Sunnysiders - The Bridges (Croatia)
- Elvin Bishop & Charlie Musslewhite - 100 Years of Blues (USA)

Discoveries of the year:

Liam Docherty (Canadian)

Larkin Poe (USA) and Monalisa Twins (International)

These are **Eric Thom's Best Blues Releases of 2020**

Elvin Bishop & Charlie Musselwhite - 100 Years Of Blues

Tinsley Ellis - Ice Cream In Hell

Rory Block - Prove it on me: Power

Women of the Blues Vol. 2

Wayne Nicholson & John Campbelljohn - Elmore's Blues.

And his Discovery of the Year is (The Great Granddaughter of) The Great White Dap Village Thing 50th Anniversary.

**Cindy Mcleod** writes

"I have to say I really dislike having to choose 5 albums out off all the brilliant stuff released some of which I've just received and haven't had a chance to listen to in any attentive way. sigh....

Duke Robillard - Blues Bash

Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne - Go

Just Do It!

Lloyd Jones - Tennessee Run

Victor Wainright & the Train - Memphis Loud

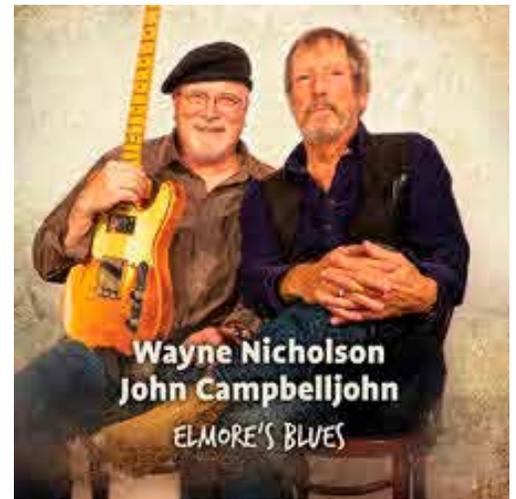
Dione Taylor - Spirits in the

Water

Discovery:

Reverend John Wilkins - Trouble

**Rico Ferrara's** selections are David Rotundo Band - So Much Trouble



New Moon Jelly Roll Freedom Rockers - Vol. 1

Robert Cray - That's What I Heard

Dion - Blues With Friends

Dan Penn - Living On Mercy

Chris Stapleton - Starting Over.

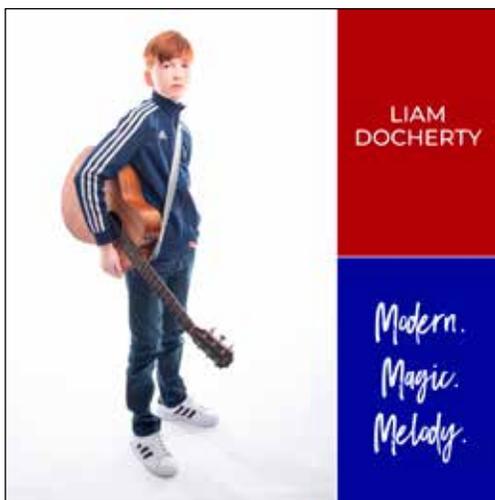
**René Moisan** writes from Montreal, "I am talking a minute to mention 2 discoveries I made through the MBA jury process:

BMW - Belzner McLean & Williams is a fine album. Also the horn-Blues of the Bluesland Horn Band is a discovery. I also loved the latest from the Durham County Poets and of course the 2 albums I released this year (Guy Bélanger's Eldorado and Adam Karch's Everything Can Change).

From TBS publicist **Sarah French**:

Wayne Nicholson & John Campbelljohn - Elmore's Blues and Terminal Station - Brotherhood (discovery of the year)

And TBS Prez **Derek Andrews** has noted his "Discovery of the Year": Bab L'Bluz released on Peter Gabriel's Real World label out of Morocco and France



Beauwater - Who Works For Who

Danny Brooks & Lil Miss Debi - No Easy Way Out / Are You Ready? The Mississippi Sessions

John Campbelljohn & Wayne Nicholson - Elmore's Blues.





**Congrats to Blues Grammy**

**Nominees:** Best Traditional Blues Album: *All My Dues Are Paid* - Frank Bey; *You Make Me Feel* - Don Bryant; *That's What I Heard* - Robert Cray Band; *Cypress Grove* - Jimmy "Duck" Holmes; *Rawer Than Raw* - Bobby Rush



For Best Contemporary Blues Album the nominees are: *Have You Lost Your Mind Yet?* - Fantastic Negrito; *Live At The Paramount* - Ruthie Foster Big Band; *The Juice* - G. Love; *Blackbirds* - Bettye Lavette; *Up And Rolling* - North Mississippi Allstars

Marcus King got his first-ever Grammy nomination for his debut solo album, *El Dorado* in the "Best Americana Album" category. Winners will be announced on Jan. 31, 2021



**Closer to home,** The Canadian Folk Awards nominations included some familiar names to our blues gang: Julian Taylor was nominated for English

Songwriter of the Year and Solo Artist of the Year. Rob Lutes' side project, Sussex received a nom for Ensemble of the Year. Crystal Shawanda is nominated for Indigenous Songwriter of the Year. And Durham County Poet Kevin Harvey is nominated for Traditional Singer of the Year. The 16th edition of the Canadian Folk Music Awards Celebration will take place online over the weekend of April 9-10, 2021

**BluesTube:** *'I PLEAD THE 61'* is a Blues Series by Eve Kinizo Films available on youtube /Vimeo/Facebook links on 'Healey's Hideaway' page. The first episode aired December 4 featuring Civil Wray and the next episode will be aired December 11 featuring Jake Chisholm. The other episodes will air every week in December so people should subscribe in order to get notification.

**Would you like to host a blues radio show?**

The loss of John Valenteyn had repercussions beyond the TBS and now CIUT-FM is looking for some blues-knowledgeable wannabe radio hosts to fill his slot and keep the blues alive on CIUT. They're looking for 4 committed individuals to act as rolling hosts, meaning a one show per month commitment. Anyone interested can contact Ken Stowar at ken.stowar@ciut.fm



The irrepresible **Johnny Max** will co-host (with Alana Bridgewater) the Toronto segment of the (virtual) Maple Blues Awards

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9. JUST FOR THE FUNK
10. IF MY BABY LEFT ME
11. KEEP THE FIRE BURNING
12. FOREVER

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Illustration by Nathaniel Mesner



**Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar**

*The Reckless One*

Samantha Martin takes no prisoners.

It's no coincidence that the cover of her new CD, *The Reckless One*, is a multi-coloured, gold-leafed representation of a hand grenade. This is, indeed, both explosive and reckless. It is also the long-awaited successor to 2015's *Send the Nightingale*, which in turn was preceded by two albums and an EP going back to 2008.

Diminutive and armed with a voice that could scrape paint blisters from a stucco wall, Ms. Martin has delivered a very different record — with a 10-piece band that'll do what old-school r&b used to do: drive you to the dance floor. And the woman howls, wails, and cleans the wax out of your ears with surgical precision.

And yet there are moments of tenderness, when the singer eases the throttle — the final song, "Who Do You," allows you to catch your breath, eases you out of the door and lets you go home quietly and reflectively.

Apart from the singer's powerhouse voice, what makes this record unique is her accompaniment. It's been a long time since a Canadian blues-based singer has surrounded herself with a horn-driven band that pushes most of the dozen songs here into overdrive.

Two back up singers, Sherie Marshall and Tafari Anthony provide a solid cushion for Martin's vocals, and the guitars/bass groove is the responsibility of Curtis Chaffey and Ian McKeown, while Dani Nash and Will Fisher play drums on five and six tracks respectively (with Adam Warner playing

on the opening song, "Love is All Around"). Andrew Moligun's contributions can't be ignored either — he plays piano, a variety of other keyboards, as well as saxes. Oh, and he also wrote the horn arrangements.

Special guest Jimmy Bowskill plays on "Loving You Is Easy," one of the mellower songs. Other participants on various cuts include co-producer Renan Yildizdogan (assorted keys, vibes, Mellotron and occasional string parts), Jeff Heisholt (organ) and Ross Hayes Citrullo (guitars). Much credit for the crisp, tough-edged sound should go to co-producer Darcy Yates.

Two teams of trombone/trumpet players (Emily Ferrell and Brian Walters, and Tom Richards and James Rhodes) play on half a dozen tracks each, and the horn-driven sound gives Delta Sugar its unique position on the Canadian blues scene.

All but one of the songs are either written by Martin or are co-writes with Jake Chisholm, lead guitarist Curtis Chaffey, Paul Reddick or the album's co-producer, Renan Yildizdogan. The exception is "Meet Me in the Morning," a relatively obscure Bob Dylan song — but given its funky old-school r&b treatment it's unlikely that the writer would recognize it.

But what really counts on this record is Samantha Martin's vision for what works to showcase her remarkable voice — and, when the band plays live, her on-stage vibe of likeable energy and smiling friendliness.

This is a stand-up, stand-out album. Everyone involved should be proud of what's been achieved here. And blues fans — in hometown Toronto, and wherever and whenever Samantha Martin tours internationally — can put this music in their hearts. (Richard Flohil)



**Steve Strongman** *Tired of Talkin'*

There's a reason Steve Strongman is considered the Best Guitarist in the Solo/Duo category in the world, he rightfully captured the title at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis.

Following on the heels of that impressive win, Strongman has released another stunning recording to his growing catalogue, with *Tired Of Talkin'*, recorded in both Nashville and Hamilton and released in 2019. The album is representative of Strongman's enormous songwriting and guitar skills, traversing from Blues-Rock to swamp and all points in between. One thing that makes Strongman so great is that there are solid melodies to satisfy the soul for a full listening experience.

Starting with the title track, "Tired Of Talkin'", the album pulls us in with a groove built blues rock feel complete with great vocals and punctuated by his beefy guitar style. The album unfolds squarely in the groove pocket, with 'Just Ain't Right' sitting in a funky New Orleans rhythm and a giant guitar sound carrying the message. Livin' the Dream is a punchy blues rock traveling song about life on the road, a perfect driving song for all. 'Highway Man' showcases Strongman's acoustic skills for a wholly (or is that holy?) traditional ear worm. The only non original on the album, 'Let's Stay Together', is a classy rendition of one of the greatest love songs ever written, with a guitar solo that brings this gem into 2020 in the most agile and personal ways.

Steve Strongman is pure joy to experience in a live music setting, but he is a magician at bringing the excitement and energy he pumps out on stage into a recording... and what a marvellous recording it is. Highly recommended. (Cindy McLeod)



**Michael Schatte** *Conundrum*

Michael Schatte demonstrates his wide-ranging artistry in his new CD, *Conundrum*. His expertise as a guitarist and vocalist is obvious, but Schatte also plays mandolin, tenor banjo, dulcimer, and violin on this recording. As well, he wrote all but two of the fifteen songs, and produced, engineered, and mixed the album. Backing him on bass is Ryan Spratt, and his two drummers Riley

*cont'd on p10*

O'Connor and Chad Lewis, in addition to session musicians Randy Cassidy, Sacha Visagie, and Carson Freeman.

In this his sixth CD, Schatte — a resident of Cobourg, Ontario, and instructor in the music department at Toronto's Centennial College — presents his amalgam of rock, blues, and Celtic stylings in what he calls "eclectic electric roots music." *Conundrum* is a tour de force of his talent, most evident in his red-hot guitar work, gorgeous vocals, and superb songwriting.

The recording blasts off with "Water in the Kettle," a sizzling rocker with Celtic touches amid fiery guitar and lively lyrics. "Genevieve" is a standout, with more fine vocals and fingerpicking. A sure favourite with listeners is the bluesy "Please Don't Dance with My Brother," a satirical saga of long-suffering sibling rivalry. Schatte describes the title track, "Conundrum," as "existential whimsy," with lyrics that probe the mysteries of life, accompanied by a captivating 6/8 African rhythm.

In "Bread, Water, Love," Schatte teams up with Canadian poet John B. Lee to adapt his poem of the same name to music, weaving exquisite vocals and acoustic guitar through an ambience that evokes antiquity. Switching it up, "Come on Down" is a stompin' boogie number reminiscent of Saturday night at the juke joint. "The Upper Hand" is a swaggering tale of hard truths of unequal love, with more inspiring guitar and tasteful intertwining sax parts.

Schatte slows it down for the sublime "In the Cold Hard Here and Now," embellished by his mandolin. The album concludes with the instrumental "Good King Richard," a compilation of Celtic tunes written by one of his major influences, guitarist Richard Thompson, and arranged by Schatte. A showcase for his ferocious fingerpicking, this number would be right at home in a raucous Irish pub.

*Conundrum* is an album that can't be pigeonholed into one genre, yet it works. Schatte's lyrics range from wistfulness to lust, philosophy to fun, menace to wit. With his exceptional voice and magnificent guitar, Michael Schatte is an impressive talent, well worth checking out.

(Sandra B. Tooze)

### Shemekia Copeland

*Uncivil War* (Alligator Records)

The daughter of a bona fide Texas Twister, Johnny Copeland, Shemekia quickly carved out a name for herself with her scorching



debut at age 19. With a voice like a hurricane, years spent woodshedding with her famous father gave her a considerable head start in the blues. Now, nine releases later, she continues to be a gale force wind to be reckoned with. Picking up where *America's Child* left off, *Uncivil War* takes a critical look at the chaos we're living in and she's got a message to spread. More focused, Copeland storms the podium with 3 covers and 9 originals (penned by John Hahn and Will Kimbrough, with Webb Wilder and Tom Hambridge checking in for a co-write). Copeland sings with such conviction, you wish for her own hand at writing because, on occasion, the preaching can seem contrived and, over time, one can't help but feel you're being scolded. Thankfully, there are moments of levity and a few surprises. The battle begins with the highly tasteful "Clotilda's On Fire" — a symbolic telling of the fiery end of America's last slave ship, with thanks to Jason Isbell's sizeable contribution on guitar. More ghosts appear with the treatment of racism on the (somewhat surprisingly) upbeat "Walk Until I Ride", Jerry Douglas' lap steel, underlining the defiant stance. The title track is the album's highlight — thematically and otherwise — flavoured by Jerry Douglas' dobro, Steve Conn's B3 and the lush background vocals of the Orphan Brigade. Lead guitarist "Kingfish" Ingram rips into the powerful "Money Makes You Ugly" as the brow-beating continues, albeit using legit references to reinforce its claim. A tribute to Dr. John seems a fitting eulogy, yet "Dirty Saint's" too-wordy approach detracts from the moment. Copeland's delightful restructuring of the Stones' sacrosanct "Under My Thumb" makes her point in subtle fashion while producer Will Kimbrough adds delicate flourishes on guitar against a wall of finger-snappers — a stand-out example of what Copeland can do when she tones things down a bit. Likewise, "Give God The Blues" embraces a gentle approach, loyal to the Shawn Mullins track, adding tasteful guitar from co-writer Phil Madeira. "Apple Pie

And A .45" is marred by overwrought lyrics while the hilarious "She Don't Wear Pink" barely fits here — but is another refreshing diversion threatening to take on a life of its own, featuring guitar from Duane Eddy and co-writer (and tongue-in-cheek co-writer), Webb Wilder.

Make no mistake. Shemekia Copeland is a young, bold and beautifully soulful voice for the blues. Her loving cover of her Dad's "Love Song", seems to speak to the West African proverb that says — "speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far." Herein lies a lesson that less can be more. (Eric Thom)



### Endrick & the Sandwiches

*Green Room Rumble* (Big in the Garden)

Ten tracks — recorded live — reveal a young band intrigued with the potential of redefining barroom blues — and making them work. A closer look at their debut from '18 portrays a band brimming with fresh ideas and original music, created by an 8-member band. Endrick & The Sandwiches is: Endrick Tremblay (lead vocals, harp, guitar, piano), Greg McEvoy (lead guitar, vocals), Simon Éthier (bass, backing vocals), Mandela Coupal Dalgleish (drums), Elyze Venne-Deshaies (sax), Anne Lauzière (baritone guitar, percussion, backing vocals), Marie-Pier Lavallée and Gabrièle Côté Lebreux (percussion, backing vocals). Unless the bars in Quebec are paying better than they do here, they won't get rich quick. But it's quite evident that money is not their key motivation. Endrick and pal, McEvoy ("music maniacs") are peas of a pod, born to perform together. Endrick's skills as a singer and harpist join McEvoy's exploratory guitar across a wide-range of musical influences, driven by their sheer love of making music that stirs people into party mode. And that's what *Green Room Rumble* is — a loving tribute to their

blues heroes, rearranged by “4 guys, 4 girls” using a Mad Dogs & Englishmen approach to big-band blues. The party starts with an energized version of Junior Parker’s “Mystery Train” as Enrick’s sturdy vocals and blazing harp join McEvoy’s aggressive guitarwork to merge against a wash of backing vocals. The energy drops with Muddy Water’s “Mannish Boy”, yet the crowd responds to its meaty groove. Slower still is their rendition of Willie Dixon/Memphis Slim’s “Choo Choo”, yet the band takes the opportunity to strut their stuff. Note this is not another copycat barrage of tired blues songs we’ve all heard too many times. Their own “PT Cruiser” demonstrates how this band works – paying homage to Endrick’s beloved PT Cruiser (with all the sex appeal of a Gremlin) – and marrying it to Billy Emerson’s “Every Woman I Know”. It’s an entertaining highlight. Their mournful take on the jazz-blues classic, “Trouble In Mind”, reveals another layer of the band’s talents – and a tasty duet featuring Lauzière. Also telling is their take on Nick Gravenites’ “Born In Chicago”, as this harp-driven classic is closest to Endrick’s obvious love for Paul Butterfield turf. Likewise, “Devil Dues” is an original boogie (as much as any boogie can be original) that explodes over the stage and shows the promise of what this band – clearly driven by the spirit of loving making music – can do. Such sincerity and dedication should carry them far. (Eric Thom)



**Beauwater** *Who Works For Who*

*Who Works for Who* is the Third release from Newfoundland based blues rockers, Beauwater and follow up to their 2017 ECMA Blues Album of the Year, *Lovers, Fools and Kings*.

For this release the power trio welcomed back special guests Kelly Hoppe of Big Sugar on Harmonica, Chris Harnett on Saxophone, Terry Campbell on Trumpet and Chris Kirby on Keys. This is the line-up that helped fuel the success of the previous release. They’re back creating a more complete and textured sound on 10 original tracks of blues-soaked

rock. As with their previous album, Beauwater defy being pigeonholed as one type of band or another. Their diversity, power and writing talent is beautifully on display with this new release.

The album opens with the title track, a high energy rocker, followed by a cut drenched in SRV vibes, “Flavor of the Week”.

Up next is “The New Disease”, a funky little cut that has Chris Kirby’s finger prints all over it. The 4<sup>th</sup> cut is a deep blues effort, “The Real McCoy”.

“Tonight She’s Gonna Burn”, the first ballad on the album, is a blues lament based on a true story. Up next is a funky, toe-tappin’ little ditty “Called Long Way Down”. It dares the listener not to want to get up and dance.

The number 7 cut is a walkin’ blues called “Nodding Off” that really brings the band’s blues chops to the forefront. This is followed up by a jazzy little number “The Broken Man Behind The Wheel”, which is such a departure in sound and style, indicative of this band’s potential and diversity.

The Number 9 cut is “Poison”, a harp-drenched blues. The final cut on the album is the quirky “One Way Out”, an appropriately titled selection for what is Beauwater’s most diverse album to date. Over all a great album to listen to, that is even more fun to dance to. (Terry Parsons)

**Alana Bridgewater and Johnny Max to co-host the Toronto segment of the (virtual) Maple Blues Awards**



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

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

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

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



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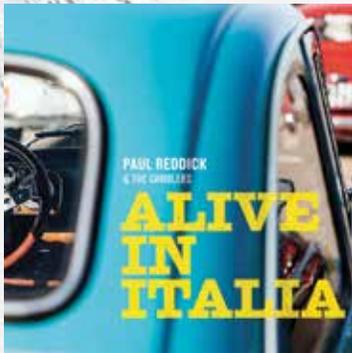
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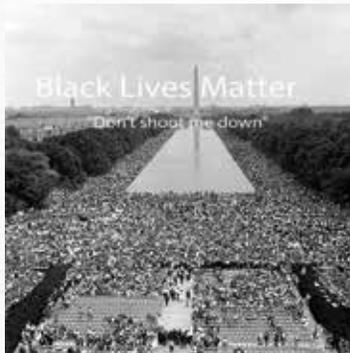
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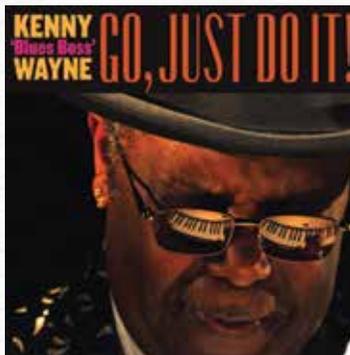
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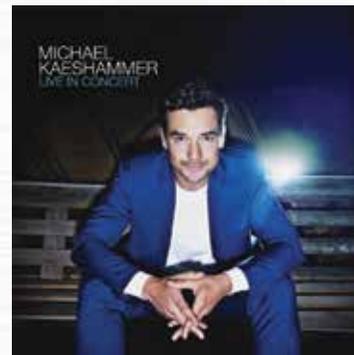
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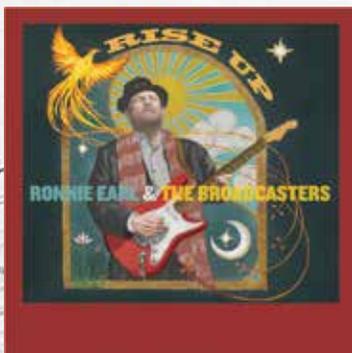
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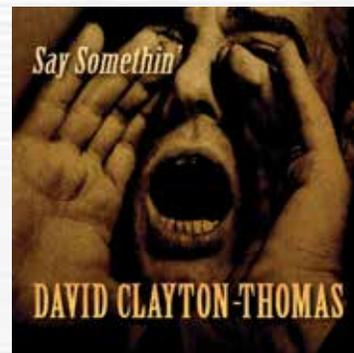
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