

HOT AUGUST BLUES

Over the years, I've discovered a great deal of great blues through *Midwest BEAT*. In a couple of months, I'm going to celebrate my third anniversary as your *Midwest BEAT* blues correspondent, thanks to Beatboss Tom Lounges.

This month, I'm going to shout about a couple of new traditional blues discoveries right in your own back yard that I hope you'll check out on CD and at live shows. There's a lot of great local music out there, and I'm always of the opinion that if I haven't heard it, it's still new (like the Rooster Record label says).

That said, I'd like to introduce you to the **Chicago Blues Angels** and the **Planetary Blues Band**.

A few *Midwest BEAT* readers know that I also write about the blues for *Cosmik Debris*, arguably the oldest music site on the Internet. Last month, we celebrated our 85th monthly anniversary online, and I shouted about the Chicago Blues Angels on those Cosmik screens, and I'd like to throw some props their way in these pages as well. Eighty-five months may not cut too much ice in the more formal world of print journalism, but let me tell you, that's more than a few lifetimes on Internet time.

THE ANGELS ANSWER MY PRAYERS

The Chicago Blues Angels hail from Plainfield, Illinois and play rooms like Sam 'n Ella's in Kankakee and Joliet's The Prime Restaurant. In May, they opened for **Tommy Castro** at Buddy Guy's Legends in Chicago. Their new CD on Blue Bella records, *Movin' On*, is well worth picking up. **Armando Cortez** and **Dave Gonzales** head up a strong band with **Kate Hoddinott** on guitar, **Nick Moss** on bass, and **Greg Campbell** on the drums.

If Nick and Kate are familiar names, that's no accident: Kate's a well-known graphic artist and designer. You might have seen her artwork on an early **Luther Alli-**

son LP, or enjoyed her website design talents on radio newsman **Dave McBride's** website. When Nick's not an Angel, he fronts **Nick Moss & The Fliptops**. His career includes a stint with the **Legendary Blues Band**.

Singer **Herman Hines** is the newest Angel, having joined after sharing a mic on 'Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay' with Dave at a local karaoke night. When "Da Her-manoator" sings "*Rooster Blues*" and "*Good Time Charlie*," I'm happy that he's an Angel: he's got pitch-perfect range, as well as the right growl, in a voice that's tailor made for the blues. Check 'em out online at: www.chicagobluesangels.com.



BLUES FROM ANOTHER PLANET

Each month, I'm blessed with a couple of CDs to review from our Beatboss Tom Lounges. This month's package almost made me cry, it was that good.

As I listened to *Blues for Our Grandfather* from the **Planetary Blues Band**, I immediately wanted to turn my writing pencils into kindling and toss out the window any dreams I've had of picking up and playing the guitar. This indie release recorded at Val-

paraiso's Back Porch Tracks ranks way up there with **Little Johnny & The UnKnown Blues Band's** CD, *Workingman Blues*. Little Johnny's release is pretty high on my list, and rest assured that the Planetary Blues Band's blues are right up there in that stratosphere.

Three brothers and one member of the **Chicago Blues Posse** make up this galactic band: **Martin** and **Michael Schaefer-Murray** share guitar duties, and Martin's lead vocals are just right for the blues. The rhythm section of **Robert Schaefer-Murray** and **Glenn E. "Wiz" Wiezbi-ki** (Chicago Blues Posse) round out the line-up, and *Blues for Our Grandfather* features 11 original and classic cuts from the likes of Elmore James ("*Talk to Me Baby*"), **Luther Allison's** arrangement of **B.B. King's** "*Why I Sing the Blues*," and **Otis Rush's** "*It Takes Time*."

The brothers' honor of their grandfather in the title track, "*Blues for Our Grandfather*," which is quite a jam! I can just see Grandpa, framed by family pictures on the CD cover art, rocking out to this disc. The guitar parts on this seven minute jam range from a jazzy, slow **Wes Montgomery** to the picking of **Duane Allman**, just to name two guitarists that I can hear in the Schaefer-Murray brothers' playing.

Of all the songs on this CD, this memorial still leaves chills up and down my spine, and I've played it at least a half-dozen times during the week I first put it in my CD player. I never met either of my grandparents, but am glad that my son and daughter knew my father. If the band's Grandpa and my dad traded stories, they'd appreciate the blues that Martin, Michael and Robert play, as they look like they'd be the same age had my dad not passed away a few years ago. I'd like to think that they're trading stories in heaven, and smiling down on how I'm celebrating the work of three very talented bluesmen.

The Planetary Blues Band more than honor their late grandfather on this disc. Their teacher, **Rocco Clipari**, the lead guitar player from **Howard & The White Boys**, should be smiling for the kudos he is given.

CONCERT SPOTLIGHT: SOUTH BEND

I don't usually single out specific towns here in my column, but South Bend, Indiana's shows this month deserve special mention.

Hoosiers should be fast to line up for these live shows, beginning on the 3rd with **Buckwheat Zydeco** at the Firefly Festival. That same night, **Koko Taylor and Her Blues Machine** lights up the State Theatre. On the 17th, **Little Charlie & The Nightcats** and **Michelle Willson & The Evil Gal Festival Orchestra** play the Blues and Rib Fest, and that same day, **Rod Piazza & His Mighty Flyers** play St. Patrick's County Park.

There's a lot of great blues happening' this August. Check 'em out live or on CD.

Until next month... let's play the blues.