A bi-monthly publication of the Sacramento Blues Society

# BLUE NOTES!

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2026
ISSUE 47
VOL. 6




KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE RECIPIENT AWARD

## President's Column

*By Marcel Smith*



As the vibrant colors of autumn surround us and we enter this season of Thanksgiving and gratitude, I would like to take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to every member of the Sacramento Blues Society.

It has been both an honor and a privilege to serve as your SBS President and to represent our organization wherever my travels have taken me. I am sincerely grateful for the trust, encouragement, and unwavering support you have extended throughout my tenure. Your confidence in my leadership has meant more to me than words can adequately express.

Serving this extraordinary blues community has been one of the greatest joys of my life. Through every event, performance, gathering, and conversation, I have been continually inspired by the passion, dedication, and love for the blues that define our membership. I extend my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to serve alongside such talented, committed, and enthusiastic individuals who work tirelessly to preserve and promote the rich tradition of blues music throughout our region.

I would also like to offer my warmest congratulations to this year's Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame inductees. This distinguished honor reflects your exceptional talent, dedication, and lasting contributions to our blues community. Your achievements have enriched our organization and strengthened the legacy of the blues for future generations. Congratulations as well to your families and loved ones, whose support, encouragement, and sacrifices have undoubtedly contributed to your success.

A special note of appreciation goes to Sally Katen and the Hall of Fame Awards Committee for their outstanding leadership, hard work, and commitment to excellence. Through their dedication and countless hours of effort, this year's Hall of Fame celebration was a tremendous success. Their work provided a meaningful opportunity for all of us to come together in recognition of the remarkable accomplishments, talents, and contributions of this year's honorees.

As we gather with family and friends during this Thanksgiving season, let us reflect on how fortunate we are to belong to a community united by a shared love of music, fellowship, and the preservation of the blues. May this season bring you joy, peace, good health, and countless reasons for gratitude.

On behalf of the Sacramento Blues Society, thank you for your continued support, participation, and dedication. I wish you and your loved ones a Happy Thanksgiving and a wonderful holiday season

**2026 Committee Chairs**

***Hall of Fame*** - Sally Katen

***Events*** - Mindy Giles

***Membership*** - Linda McShane

***Sponsorships/Fundraising*** - **Open**

***Finance Committee*** - Marcel Smith

***Public Relations & Social Media*** - Mindy Giles

***Volunteer Coordinator*** - Lynette Shumway Withycombe

***Blues in the Schools, Big Day of Giving*** - Rick Snyder

***Merchandise & Member Care*** - Lynette Shumway Withycombe

***Blue Sunday*** - Cari Chenkin

***Blue Notes Newsletter*** - Cari Chenkin

***IBC Competition*** - Shirley McCoy

***Webmaster*** - Mindy Giles

***Board of Directors Development*** - **Open**

*Help keep the blues alive - Contact a Chair or Board Member to volunteer for the Board or a Committee!*

***The Sacramento Blues Society (SBS)*** *is one of the oldest blues societies in California, founded in 1979. SBS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed to preserve and promote blues music as an art form. SBS has kept the blues tradition alive in the Sacramento area by promoting the local blues music scene, bringing internationally renowned artists to the region, educating students with "Blues in the Schools", acknowledging our local blues artists, providing a Musicians' Crisis Fund and publishing the* ***Blue Notes*** *six times a year. SBS is an affiliate member of The Blues Foundation (which honored us with a 2015 Keeping the Blues Alive Award) which provides educational opportunities for young people with The Blues Foundation's "Blues in The Schools" Program.*

**Board of Directors Meetings - 2nd Tuesday of each Month, 7:00 p.m.**

*All SBS Members in good standing are invited to attend.*

*Meetings are held via Zoom; to request an invitation, email: president@sacblues.org*

**2026 Board of Directors**

Marcel Smith, President

Cari Chenkin, Vice President

Shirley McCoy, Secretary

Laurel Coppess, Treasurer

Rick Snyder, Parliamentarian

Barbara Katen

Lynette Shumway Withycombe

Sally Katen

Bobbie Felt Armstrong

*We have room for two more directors - YOUR name could be here!*


**Sacramento Blues Society Publications**

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*President's Message, Con't. from P. 2*

filled with happiness and cherished memories.

With heartfelt gratitude and appreciation, Marcel Smith

## Blues In The Schools Update

*By Rick Snyder (aka Rico)*
*Blues in the Schools Committee Chair*



Fall is a busy planning season for Sacramento Blues in the Schools, and we're excited about what's coming. We're almost ready to start booking assemblies through SCOE and the Any Given Child Program, which will put live blues in front of even more students across our region.

We're also waiting to hear back from several middle schools and high schools about joining our afterschool Artist-in-Residence program. Fingers crossed. Giving older students hands-on time with working blues musicians is some of the most rewarding work we do.

As we move into the holiday season, things always slow down a bit. We're not slowing down on outreach, though. We continue to contact elementary schools on our own to book assemblies, so the calendar is full when the new year begins.

**Welcome, Julio!**

Please join us in welcoming our newest BITS Committee member, Julio Covington. Be sure to vote for Julio at our upcoming Board of Directors elections.

**Hats Off to Our Team**

Please put your hands together for Mindy Giles, SBS Publicist and all-around ombudsman for the Society, who is an integral part of our BITS Committee. And let's not forget Steve Boettner, retired music teacher from Rosemont High School and Artist-in-Residence teacher for BITS. His experience and passion for teaching make a difference every time he steps into a classroom.

**Help Us Keep the Music Going**

We've always relied on the kindness of strangers, to borrow a famous line. Please consider making a donation to our BITS fund at https://app.dvforms.net/api/dv/y3xoo5.

We'd also love to have you sponsor one of our events. To get involved, contact Rick Snyder at BITS@sacblues.org.

Keep the blues alive, and the kids will keep playing them.




## What's On Your Playlist?

***with Rodrigo Mantovani***

*By Barbara Katen*



This time around, I'm especially excited to share the musical favorites of one of my favorite bass players — Rodrigo Mantovani, the extraordinarily talented Brazilian musician who holds down the low end with the Nick Moss Band!



Rodrigo is not just another bass player. He's a seriously gifted musician, a master of both the electric and upright bass, and, dare I say, a rather handsome fellow to boot! And when he gets his hands on that upright bass? Oh, my goodness! Watching and listening to him work his magic is enough to make this blues-loving gal weak in the knees!

But don't just take my word for it. *Blues Blast Magazine* once described Rodrigo as "one of the finest blues bass players on the planet." And believe me, that praise is well deserved!

If you'd like to learn more about this remarkable musician, check out his featured interview in the May 2020 issue of *Blues Blast Magazine,* as well as his December 2025 interview with *American Blues Scene*. And while you're at it, be sure to visit Rodrigo's YouTube channel to see and hear this phenomenal musician in action.

Beyond all that talent, Rodrigo is also a genuinely warm, gracious, and down-to-earth guy. What more could a blues fan ask for?

And now, without further ado, let's find out what gets this incredible bass player's toes tapping! Rodrigo has shared ten of his current favorite blues grooves, and what a collection it is! From legendary pioneers to some wonderful old-school treasures, his selections are a reminder of the deep roots and rich history of the music we love.

"Drown in My Own Tears" — Ray Charles

"Let's Make Up and Be Friends Again" — Leroy Carr

"Built Right on the Ground" — Blind Teddy Darby

"Too Many Woman Blues" — Willie Lane

"Darlin', Do You Remember Me" — Lightnin' Hopkins

"Remember Me" — Snooks Eaglin

"Prison Cell Blues" — Blind Lemon Jefferson

"That's No Way to Get Along" — Robert Wilkins

"Some Cold Rainy Day" — Bertha "Chippie" Hill, with Tampa Red & Georgia Tom

"Rising River Blues" — George Carter

There you have it, blues lovers! Ten selections from a world-class musician who clearly knows and appreciates the roots of the blues. Give these tunes a listen, explore a little musical history, and the next time you catch Rodrigo Mantovani performing with the Nick Moss Band, pay special attention to that bass! Trust me, you won't be disappointed!

## It's SBS Election Time!

As mandated by our bylaws, the Sacramento Blues Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting December 6, concurrently with our Holiday Party. This is the time we conduct any business requiring a vote from our overall membership. We will be voting to fill openings on our Board of Directors, and to approve amendments to our existing Bylaws..

The Elections Committee will mail ballots to all SBS members in November, and ballots must be received by mail NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 5, 2026 to be counted. Ballots have the SBS address right on them, and all you need is an envelope and stamp.

If you plan to attend the Holiday Party, you may also BRING your completed ballot to the party and deposit it into the ballot box that will be there. All votes, whether mailed or dropped off, will be counted at the party, and the newly elected Board Members will be introduced to the membership at the party.

There are eight BOD positions to fill, with eight candidates up for election. Each candidate has submitted a brief statement for your consideration. Please take a moment to read them over, and when you receive your ballot, please VOTE!

## Candidates for the Board of Directors

### *Cari Chenkin*



I'm Cari Chenkin, and I'm running for a seat on the Sacramento Blues Society Board of Directors. I'm a current Board member, and a Past President, so I have the experience necessary to contribute to the Board and the well-being of the Sac Blues Society. As a musician, blues lover, current *Blue Notes* newsletter editor and Chairwoman of the Blue Sunday committee, I believe my experience and skills will be a valuable addition to the plans and projects that the Sacramento Blues Society wants to implement next year.

### *Laurel Coppess*



My name is Laurel Coppess, and I am running for reelection to the Board of the Sacramento Blues Society. As your Board treasurer for almost the past two years, along with the day-to-day processing, payment and posting of expenses and deposits of revenues, I have worked to help, support, and advise the Board as we navigated through an incredibly difficult time financially. Our losses due to the FlipCause (our online processor for memberships and donations) bankruptcy, plus the costs associated with the switch to another processing company that this necessitated, totaled approximately 30% of our annual revenues, making it extremely important that our financial and accounting records be as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

While I am not a CPA, I do have a bachelor's degree in accounting and several years of experience in auditing, in addition to the experience I've gained over the past two years as SBS treasurer. As a detail-oriented, professionally minded individual, I hope that I have made a valuable contribution to the Board, It is my hope that you would be willing to vote to return me to that position, so that together we can continue the mission of the Sacramento Blues Society to promote and preserve blues music as an original American art form. Thank you.

### *Julio Covington*



I have been a proud and dedicated member of the Sacramento Blues Society for many years, finding both a musical home and many wonderful friendships through SBS. I previously served two consecutive terms on the Board of Directors, although personal circumstances required me to resign during my second term. I'm back now and eager to once again serve SBS and help guide its future.

Many of you know me as one of the welcoming faces at the door each month at SBS Blue Sunday at the Torch Club and from proudly representing SBS at music events throughout our community. I would be honored to serve another two-year term on the Board and would sincerely appreciate your vote.

### *Barbara Katen*



I have proudly served on the Sacramento Blues Society Board of Directors for well over 13 years, including several years as Secretary, four years as Vice President, and as President during SBS's 45th Anniversary year. I have also served on numerous committees, including Hall of Fame, Events, Newsletter, Finance, and Bylaws.

I am seeking one final two-year term on the Board, with the goal of continuing to serve the organization I love while helping encourage and welcome a new generation of SBS members into leadership. I believe strongly in honoring our history while preparing SBS for a vibrant future.

It has been an honor to serve this remarkable organization, and I would be grateful for the opportunity to serve one final term.

### *Sally Katen*



Since joining the Sacramento Blues Society in 2006, I have been proud to serve an organization that means so much to our blues community. I joined the Board of Directors that same year, serving four years as Secretary and later as President from 2020 through 2023. Since 2010, I have chaired the SBS Hall of Fame Committee, and I continue to serve on the Events Committee.

While health challenges have limited some of my social activities, they have not diminished my dedication to SBS or my ability to fulfill the responsibilities of a Director. I remain committed and ready to continue serving the organization and helping carry its mission forward. I would be grateful for your support and honored to serve another term on the SBS Board of Directors.

### *Marcel Smith*

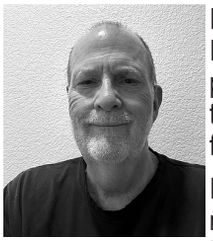


It is my goal to continue serving as a Board Member of the Sacramento Blues Society. I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve an organization that is dedicated to our community, preserving the rich heritage of the blues, and supporting the next generation of blues artists and enthusiasts.

There is still so much meaningful work to be done, and I am proud to be part of this important endeavor. I look forward to continuing to contribute my time, energy, and commitment to the mission of the Sacramento Blues Society.

*SBS Election, Con't. from P. 4*

### *Rex Smith*



I am running for the SBS Board of Directors and I hope you will consider voting for me. I was previously elected to the SBS Board for two terms and feel called to serve the organization for another term.

I was a trial attorney for several decades, mostly representing those injured on the job. After retiring I served on my HOA Board…almost 4,000 homes and a multimillion dollar budget.

The mandate of the SBS is essentially to preserve and promote Blues Music which is a uniquely American genre of music. When I was previously on the SBS Board I updated a couple of our By Laws and you voted to approve them. I am currently honored to be Co-Chair of a Board Committee to make some necessary updates to some of the remaining By Laws.

I have some thoughts about how to increase attendance at our Blues Events by getting you, the members, to help do some of the promotion of our Events. I would also like to see the Blues Society jointly produce an Event or two with other non-profit organizations that exist to promote other important genres of music.

Thank you for reading my SBS Board Candidate Statement.

### *Lynette Withycombe*



I was introduced to the blues by Earl Withycombe in 2014. Upon retirement, I sought to devote time to the worthy cause of the Sacramento Blues Society. I have served on the board for the last few years as the Merchandise Chairperson and Volunteer coordinator. I would very much like to continue in this capacity.

## Proposed Bylaw Amendments to Appear on The SBS Ballot

In addition to electing members to the Sacramento Blues Society Board of Directors, this year's ballot will include two proposed amendments to the SBS Bylaws.

The SBS Board and Bylaws Committee periodically review the Bylaws to ensure they continue to reflect the needs and operation of the organization. Members will be asked to vote YES (approve) or NO (do not approve) on each proposed amendment.

### *Article IV, Section 8 — Place of Board Meetings*

**Current Language:**

"Meetings of the Board shall be held at such place within Sacramento County, California which has been designated by resolution of the Board. In the absence of such designation, any Board meeting shall be valid only if held on the written consent of all Directors given either before or after the meeting and filed with the secretary of the SBS or after all Board members have been given written notice of the meeting as hereinafter provided for special meetings of the Board."

**Proposed Amendment:**

Revise Section 8 to permit meetings of the Board of Directors to be conducted remotely by electronic means, including video conference, telephone conference, or other electronic means permitted under applicable California law.

**Proposed Revised Language:**

"Meetings of the Board shall be held at such place within Sacramento County, California which has been designated by resolution of the Board. In the absence of such designation, any Board meeting shall be valid only if held on the written consent of all Directors given either before or after the meeting and filed with the Secretary of the SBS, or after all Board members have been given written notice of the meeting as hereinafter provided for special meetings of the Board.

Meetings of the Board of Directors may also be conducted remotely by electronic means, including video conference, telephone conference, or other electronic means permitted under applicable California law."

The purpose of this amendment is to retain the existing provisions governing the place of Board meetings while adding the option for the Board to meet remotely by electronic means.

### *Article IV, Section 19(c) — Director Election Rotation Schedule*

**Current Language:**

"(c) Director Election Rotation Schedule. Elections of Directors shall take place each December at the annual meeting of the SBS's membership according to the following schedule:

(i) Group A: Seats 1 through 6, elected on even-numbered years.

(ii) Group B: Seats 7 through 11, elected on odd-numbered years.

Notwithstanding Article IV, Section 3 of these Bylaws, the initial Group B Directors appointed/elected at the time of the adoption of these Bylaws shall have a one (1) year term of office."

**Proposed Amendment:**

Replace the current Group A/Group B Director election rotation schedule with the following:

**Proposed Revised Language**:

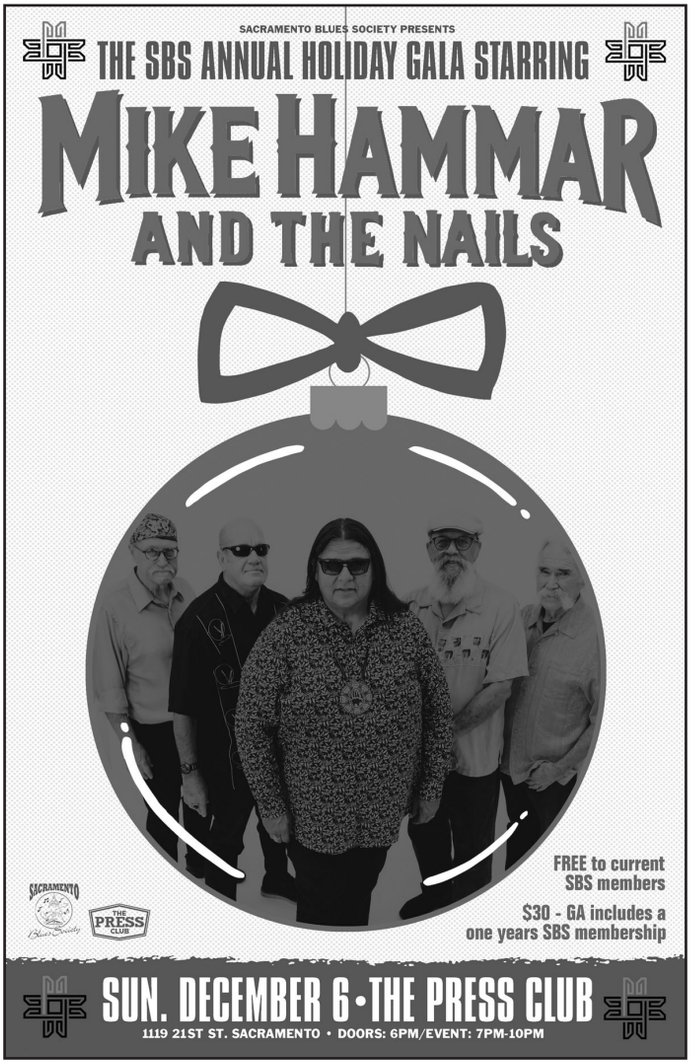
"(c) Director Elections. Board of Directors seats shall be for a term of two (2) years, with yearly elections to fill expiring, vacating, and open seats."

The purpose of this amendment is to eliminate the designated Group A/Group B rotation while retaining two-year terms for Directors and providing for elections each year to fill Board seats as needed.

**Member Vote**

Both proposed amendments will appear on the same ballot as the election of members to the SBS Board of Directors. Each proposed Bylaw amendment will be voted on separately.

Members are encouraged to review both the current and proposed language before casting their votes.




***Calling all Hammarheads!***

## Our Annual SBS December Membership Gala is Sunday, Dec. 6 at The Press Club

### *Starring Mike Hammar and the Nails*

*By Mindy Giles*



We hope you all notice year after year how the Events Committee bring the goods for our annual and still FREE Membership Party and Gala. Well, count 2026 as another one.

**Sunday, Dec.6, 2026**

**The Press Club, 1119 21st St./ Sacramento 95811**

**Doors: 6 pm, Event: 7pm**

**Tix: Free to all current members (bring your card)**

**GA: $30 entrance fee includes a one-year membership to the SBS. (On sale online Nov.1.)**

Among the powerful blues, blues-rock, and Americana bands creating original music in the Central California heartland, Mike Hammar and the Nails register highest on the blues Richter scale.

It's why Mike and his terrific band won the local IBC here in Sacramento in 2025 and is the band we proudly sent to Memphis for the International Blues Challenge in January of 2026. They became official semi-finalists, made waves, made international friends and truly have become one of the top "ambassadors of the blues" the SBS ever sent south.

"Hammarheads" will tell you there is another reason for their popularity. I think it has to do with another "scale". In blues lyrics, it's always been relatability, the words that speak personally to the heart of the matter for listeners. Add the music that carries those lyrics. Empathy. Feel. There is a real thing in western medicine, The Basic Empathy Scale (BES) and it has been internationally used to measure empathy. Mike is a citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation and of Southern Sierra Miwuk ancestry, and spent thirty –three years as a teacher, returned to school to earn his Master's degree and become an assistant principal. He has been "retired" for six years but clearly guides and mentors through being a full-time musician now.

When you talk to Mike Hammar off stage as he moves around a room, shaking hands, giving a hug, smiling, always LISTENING, even though he laughingly says he is a "jawbone, " he is connecting to people, empathing….and gathering stories and inspiration for the band's next record. "We are getting ready for our fourth album, hoping for an early spring recording and then having a summer release."

Mike is in writing mode right now. "Music comes first," he says. "It's the lyrics that are the molasses! I've always been bad about having an affective filter, the fear of how lyrics are going to be taken. But I'm freeing myself. No filters are liberty!"

He is also having a second romance with his guitar, and his attribution is that 2026 was a momentous year for more regional touring, and thus deeper re-connections with many brilliant guitar friends from over a decade ago—Tommy Castro, Anson Fundeburgh, Nick Moss, Jr. Watson, Joey Delgado. "I'm in my next life, getting better, getting that guitar bug again!'

All songs in the most recent album, 2024's *Raised in the Dirt* were written and produced by Mike. His intrepid and original band of brothers from the very beginning are The Nails: "The Professor" Mike Boykin on harmonica/backup vocals, Sparky Gehres on bass guitar, Greg Merino on drums, and Allan 'B3 Blues" Carroll on the Hammond organ. Secret weapon was Jeff Sanders, best known for his mastering credit for Stevie Wonder's album *Songs in the Key of Life*.

Our Dec. 6 event with Mike Hammar and the Nails will be a much-needed feel good finale to the year. It's highly recommended that you renew your membership online now. Avoid the pesky lines.

Enjoy cocktails, food, then vote for and welcome the new SBS Board members.

Dress up, dress down, your choice. It's a democracy and freedom is important! There will be both seating and a dance floor. We've produced four events at the Press Club since they re-opened at their new Midtown location, so many of you know there is an easy flow between the gracious, warm front room full of tables, comfortable couches and fashionable wing-backed chairs. There are also several large screen TVs with great sound, so that you can see and hear the band performing live just steps away in the music room.

## Introducing the Bob Cosman Talent Acquisition Fund

At its September meeting, the Sacramento Blues Society Board of Directors approved the establishment of the Bob Cosman Talent Acquisition Fund, an exciting new initiative dedicated to bringing outstanding blues talent to Sacramento.

Named in honor of Bob Cosman (2026 Hall of Fame member) and his lasting contributions to our blues community, the fund celebrates his legacy by helping keep the music alive for years to come.

The fund will help SBS attract both nationally recognized blues headliners and promising rising stars by providing financial support for artist bookings and production costs, without jeopardizing the Society's operating budget.

For our members, this means more opportunities to enjoy exceptional live blues performances while helping Sacramento remain a vibrant destination for touring musicians.

Want to help bring great blues talent to Sacramento? Tax-deductible contributions to the Bob Cosman Talent Acquisition Fund are welcome. Visit sacblues.org or speak with an SBS Board member to learn more.

## Arbess Williams: More Than the Blues

*By Daniel Pratt* *Photos by Daniel Pratt*

### *Introduction by Mindy Giles*

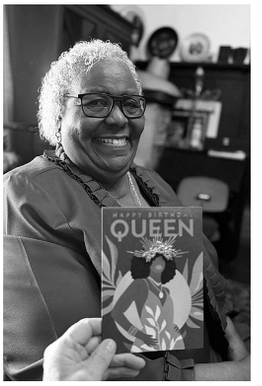
*This spring, I visited with long-time blues fan Daniel Pratt at his home. While watching YouTube blues videos, I learned that Danny and Jimmy Pailer were planning on flying to San Diego later in the summer to celebrate their good friend Arbess Williams' 80th birthday party.*

*It seemed to me a righteous thing for the SBS to collectively send our best wishes and some blues gifts to her on this special day and let her know that she still is a towering figure and voice in the long history of the SBS. Because, of course, we see her framed photo at the top left of our Hall of Fame Wall at the Torch every time there. We hear her riveting 13-minute version of "Walking the Backstreets and Crying" every time we experience our yearly "Gone But Not Forgotten" video in person at the Hall of Fame Awards or anytime we make a late-night visit online to the SBS YouTube Channel.*

*So, we gathered MANY deeply felt written birthday wishes from friends and fans on a big birthday card during a BLUE SUNDAY afternoon, and at the annual summer party in Liz Walker's backyard. We sent along SBS earrings and pins, SBS and Little Charlie Baty tee shirts, a Front Row Blues calendar, our post-pandemic Back In Business CD compilation and several SBS member band CDS. Owner Marina Texiera donated a Torch Club tee.*

*Danny hand-delivered ithe birthday package for us all along with Sacramento love and affection on a sweet weekend. I asked Danny to take photos and write about his visit and how much Arbess means to him. Well done all around, Danny. Thank you!*

My love affair with the Sacramento blues scene started before I was even old enough to legally order a beer. When I was about 19 or 20, my Aunt Pat would take me to Sam's Hofbrau on J Street. She'd order a pitcher of beer, we'd share it, and I was introduced to a world of live music that I absolutely fell in love with. There was something about Sam's, the music, the people and the atmosphere that grabbed me.




Once I turned 21, I kept going back for more. That's when I discovered Johnny Heartsman and Arbess Williams. I loved watching Johnny and Arbess perform together, and Sam's became the place to be. What I couldn't possibly have known then was that the woman I was watching onstage, Sacramento's Queen of the Blues, would become a dear friend who would still be part of my life more than four decades later.

During those years I bounced back and forth between Sacramento and San Francisco, but I'd still come back for the Thursday night shenanigans at Sam's. I was working at the Chart House in San Francisco then, and sometimes I'd bring coworkers to Sacramento to catch Johnny and Arbess. Apparently Sacramento was a little too much fun for some of them. After one coworker went missing for the night and missed his shift the next day, my general manager banned me from bringing any more employees to Sacramento.

When Arbess had gigs in San Francisco, we'd get together there too. One night, when I was living on Haight Street, she showed up at my house with her entourage. I did what came naturally to me and made everybody a big pasta dinner.

Those weren't always easy years for me. I was drinking too much and dealing with periods of depression. I remember one night wandering around North Beach alone, sad and buzzed. I walked into Grant & Green, having no idea who was playing.

And there was Arbess.

I didn't even know she was in town. But seeing that familiar face and hearing that music changed everything about that night. Suddenly, I felt like everything was going to be OK. People think of the blues as sad music. For me, it has often been the music that carried me through sadness.

Years later, Arbess was performing at the Heritage Festival. I was sick as a dog, but I couldn't imagine missing her. I planted myself against the stage in the front row and watched her perform. Jimmy Pailer, who had played with Arbess for many years, was on guitar that day, and the two of them were absolutely tearing up the stage. Only later did I learn that I'd had norovirus. Had I known how contagious I was, I obviously would have stayed home.



Just a few months ago, Jimmy and I flew to San Diego and stayed with Arbess at her home to celebrate her 80th birthday. After more than 40 years of friendship, being there with her was something I will never forget. At 80, Arbess is still Arbess. Kind, loving, full of life and simply a wonderful human being.

The blues has carried me through some of the best and worst times of my life. But it gave me something even more precious.

It gave me Arbess Williams.

[Daniel Pratt is a retired chef and restaurant general manager, photographer, foodie, avid traveler, longtime Sacramento blues enthusiast and member of the Sacramento Blues Society.]

# A Hall of Fame Afternoon to Remember

## *Celebrating the People Who Keep the Blues Alive*

*By Sally Katen, HOF Chair*

*Photos by Dale Roberts, Mindy Giles, Janet Hongola & Cynthia Juarez*



The Sacramento Blues Society celebrated its 2026 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Sunday, October 4, at a new home this year—the Press Club. It was a day for blues lovers, family members and friends ready to celebrate another remarkable group of people who have helped shape and sustain Sacramento's blues community. Master of Ceremonies Liz Walker welcomed the crowd and got the afternoon underway.



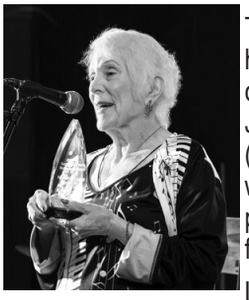

SBS Vice President Cari Chenkin opened with remarks about the Sacramento Blues Society, the *Blue Notes* and introduced the newly established Bob Cosman Memorial Talent Acquisition Fund, honoring Bob's legacy and his many years of dedication of documenting and supporting our blues community. She segued into the introduction of Hall of Fame member Jan Kelley.

Jan spoke about the Gene Chambers Musician's Crisis Fund and the International Blues Challenge (IBC). Julio Covington shared information about Blues in the Schools (BITS), the Little Charlie Baty Scholarship Fund, and the Mick Martin Student Fund—all reminders that SBS is about much more than putting on a great show. It is about supporting musicians, educating young people and helping ensure the blues continues for generations to come.

Then came one of the most meaningful traditions of our annual Hall of Fame ceremony: the *Gone But Not Forgotten* video honoring our brothers and sisters in blues who are no longer with us. It is always one of the most emotional moments of the afternoon—a mixture of sadness, memories, smiles and, yes, more than a few tears. Gone, perhaps, but certainly not forgotten.



Next, it was time to welcome the 2026 Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame inductees. Fittingly, our Master of Ceremonies, Liz Walker, became the first inductee of the day. Liz was inducted by Jan Kelley (HOF 2014) and Dana Moret (HOF 2024) in recognition of her years of dedication, support, and involvement in the Sacramento Blues Society and Blues in the Schools.



The late Bob Cosman was inducted posthumously and honored for his longstanding contributions. Bob was inducted by his wife, Jan Kelley (2014), along with Liz Walker (2026) a meaningful tribute to a man whose work and presence remain very much a part of our blues family.



Long time local blues musician Dave Croall was the third inductee, recognized for his extensive contributions to the regional music community. Dave was inducted by Pat "Rat-a-Tat" Balcom (HOF 2013) and Dave Segal (HOF 2025).



Musician Peter Philis, a key figure in the local Sacramento's blues culture, became the fourth member of the 2026 Hall of Fame class and was inducted by Chris Fraire (HOF 2022).

The final inductee was the late Sonny Pasioles, honored posthumously for his dedication to sustaining and enriching our local blues community. Sonny was inducted by Lew Fratis (HOF 2013) who presented his award to Patrick Armstrong.



And there was something especially appropriate about every presentation: each of our 2026 honorees was inducted by previous Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame inductees. It was a wonderful reminder that our Hall of Fame is more than a collection of names—it is a continuing history, with one generation of Sacramento blues people honoring the next.

After the inductions, everyone had a chance to catch their breath, visit with friends and take a short break. But this is the Sacramento Blues Society, after all. We weren't about to spend the entire afternoon sitting quietly in our chairs!




Aaron "King" Moreno (HOF 2014) and the Imperials, with his original band, Steve Linn on drums, Ben Thompson on bass, Frank Maranzino key boards with special guest Kenny Marchese (HOF 2019) took the stage and quickly turned ceremony into celebration. The music kicked in, the crowd loosened up, and before long there was rocking, rolling and dancing—there was a little break to hold the annual raffle and the band returned and finished the perfect way to close an afternoon devoted to the people and music we love.

Sounds like a pretty successful SBS afternoon to us. But wait, we still needed to go to the Torch Club, where all the Inductees' photos were hung on the Famous SBS Hall of Fame Wall! The wall hanging honors were done by music host Dave Segal (HOF 2025). With the wall hanging completed, a couple of the new HOF Inductees got to play.

Congratulations to the Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame Class of 2026: Liz Walker, Bob Cosman, David Croall, Peter Philis and Sonny Pasioles. Their contributions are now officially part of Sacramento blues history—but more importantly, their influence continues every time the music plays.

This is not possible without our volunteers who step up every year to help put this great event together. Mindy Giles (HOF 2021) Stage Manager, Barbara Katen for assisting me and Mindy with whatever we needed done! Bobbie Felt-Armstrong and Donald Jacobson our raffle Queen & King! Merchandise: Lynette Shumway, Earl Withycombe and Esther & Ernie Vasquez. Roni Cook for doing the

*2026 Hall of Fame, Con't. from P. 8*

HOF Certificates every year, Torch Club and host Dave Segal (HOF 2025), and a special thank you goes out to member band leader Carmen Ratti's 123-Awards.com, for donating this year's awards! A Big thank you to everyone who came, and to those who helped!

Keeping the Blues Alive in Sacramento!






| Torch Club | WWW.TORCHCLUB.NET | |
|---|---|---|
| **NOVEMBER 2026** | | |
| NOV 6TH | BILL MYLAR AND FRIENDS | 6-8PM |
| NOV 7TH | STACIE EAKES | JIMMY PAILER'S 70TH BDAY | 9PM-12AM |
| NOV 12TH | THE GIT DOWN | 8:30-11PM |
| NOV 14TH | RUN TO FEED THE HUNGRY BENEFIT W/ ROB SAYWER | 6-8PM |
| NOV 15TH | SUNDAY BLUES JAM | 4-7PM |
| NOV 19TH | DANNY SANDOVAL & HIS AMIGOS | 9PM-12AM |
| NOV 20TH | AKI KUMAR | 9PM-12AM |
| NOV 22ND | SUNDAY BLUES JAM | 4-7PM |
| NOV 28TH | AARON KING & THE IMPERIALS | 6-8PM |
| NOV 28TH | MERCY ME BAND | 9PM-12AM |
| NOV 29TH | SBS BLUES W/ ROOSTER | 4-7PM |
| **DECEMBER 2026** | | |
| DEC 4TH | BILL MYLAR & FRIENDS | 6-8PM |
| DEC 5TH | THE HUCKLEBUCKS | 6-8PM |
| DEC 5TH | DEKE DICKERSON, TH LOSIN STREAKS | 9PM-12AM |
| DEC 6TH | BLUES JAM | 4-7PM |
| DEC 12TH | THE STUFF | 6-8PM |
| DEC 13TH | SUNDAY BLUES JAM | 4-7PM |
| DEC 16TH | THE DELTAZ | 8:30-11PM |
| DEC 20TH | SUNDAY BLUES JAM | 4-7PM |
| DEC 27TH | SBS BLUES W/ BILL MYLAR | 4-7PM |

904 15TH STREET | SACRAMENTO

## Compassionate Service Committee

*By Lynette Withycombe*

The SBS Board of Directors has established the new COMPASSIONATE SERVICE COMMITTEE. Lynette Withycombe will chair this committee. The purpose of this committee is to provide emotional, moral and physical support to our SBS family members in need. Such support can include things like meals, local transportation, companion visits, phone call check-ins and other non-financial needs. If you would like to be included on the phone tree when services are needed, or if you know of anyone in need of services, please contact Lynette at (760)525-3288 or shumwaylynette@yahoo.com.

Glad to be of service.

## 2026 Volunteers of the Year

### *Esther and Ernie Vasquez*

*By Lynette Withycombe*

I'm proud to announce that the SBS Board of Directors has named Esther and Ernie Vasquez as Volunteers of the Year for 2026.



This "dynamic duo" has been serving our blues community 11 years. First invited to join SBS by Willie Bown in 2015. They have been volunteering ever since and where you find one you will find the other. They are a package deal.

Esther and Ernie are very enthusiastic ambassadors of our blues society. They share our and believe in our mission and promote our programs. Ernie is an excellent spokesman for the BITS program; keeping the blues alive in the next generation. Esther and Ernie both say they enjoy speaking with new people and feel great satisfaction in signing up new members.

Working side by side at the merchandise/membership table, they really complement each other. Ernie is very knowledgeable about the history of the blues and bands, while Esther is good at collecting money and completing the all important paperwork. They enjoy getting a shout-out from the stage for event attendees to stop by and visit the SBS table.

Esther and Ernie like that volunteering combines two opportunities: to serve an organization that makes a difference and to see amazing performances.

"We were very surprised to hear that we are receiving this award. We are humbled and honored to be recognized for our efforts while just being ourselves. Thank you."

Well done, my friends. Well done!

## *"Blue Sunday"* Update

*By Cari Chenkin*

*Photos by Cari Chenkin*



Now in its fifth full year, our "Blue Sunday" program has become a beloved feature of the Sacramento Blues Society experience. We started the series in August of 2021 as a way to benefit our member bands and it's grown in popularity with both bands and audiences.

In this issue, we'll review only the August "Blue Sunday" show, since we didn't have one in September. October's show will have occurred too late for press time, so we'll cover it in the next *Blue Notes*.

Coming to "Blue Sunday" on November 29 is Rooster, a band from the Chico area, who previously played for us back in October, 2023. And on deck for the December 27 date is the Bill Mylar Blues Band.

I'm now booking March - December, 2027 Blue Sundays. **Member bands, especially those new to the SBS or who haven't played a "Blue Sunday" yet, or who played one back in 2022, 2023 or 2024, please contact me if you want to book our 2027 dates. Reach me at: editor.sacblues@gmail.com.**

### *Sunday, August 30 - Yahmo*

We were pleased to welcome back Chico area band Yahmo for their second Blue Sunday appearance, the last time having been in March of 2025. Yahmo is a five-piece ensemble consisting of Caroline Fairchild – Violin, Emery LeRoy – Bass, Edward Bakus – Drums, Nick Wallace – Keys and Yahmo Ahqha - Guitar/Vocals.



The band started off the first set with The Meters' "Sissy Strut", featuring solos by violinist, bass player, then guitar & keys, and even a brief drum solo. They followed that with the classic "Help Me", Yahmo covering vocals, and featuring a keyboard solo that borrowed riffs from "Green Onions"



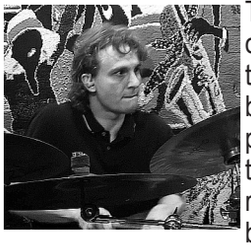
A tasty cover of Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put a Spell on You" showcased a great solo from the fiddle player. A few tunes later, Yahmo's vocal on "Smokestack Lightning" eerily mimicked Howlin Wolf perfectly.

Their notable rollicking cover of 'Stagger Lee" rocked & filled the dance floor. They closed the first set with Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Child", highlighting Yahmo's fluid and sensual guitar chops & judicious use of wah-wah pedal. The song also featured a great back & forth trading of phrases between guitar & violin, then, a mini rhythm section solo, followed by a keyboard solo, giving every band member a chance to stretch out & shine.



Having established their blues bona fides with that sizzling first set of well-curated blues classic covers, Yahmo promised a second set of all original songs. Starting off with "The Shuffler", (which refers to gambling) they went on to perform "Versions of Myself". A few tunes later, "Halo" featured some nice harmony between guitar and violin. The band moved into funky territory with a couple of numbers that really showed off the keyboard player.





The third set opened with "Red Hot Mama" and continued to rock hard. This band loves funk and plays it well. Some of the violin work was reminiscent of the band It's a Beautiful Day. They closed the show w a cover of Buddy Miles' "Them Changes". It was a fun afternoon, and if you're up in the Chico area, you'll want to make a point to catch their shows. Follow them on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/yahmomusic.



*Blue Sunday, Con't. from P. 10*











## Danielle Nicole Band Show Review

### *August 22, 2026 at the Sofia*

*By Shirley McCoy*



*Photos by Barbara Katen, Cameron Christensen & Cari Chenkin*

Danielle Nicole was someone I have wanted to see for a while, especially after chatting with her about her latest album, *Fireflies* (reviewed in this issue of *Blue Notes*) and after she received another Blues Music Award earlier this year.



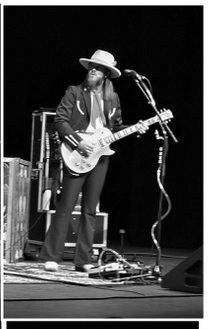
It's a shame there wasn't more of a crowd for her, but I feel like I was one of the lucky few who got to see her. Both the musical and romantic chemistry was undeniable between Danielle and her husband, guitar player Brandon Miller. They were joined on drums by Pat Adams. For a trio, they put out a lot of power. And Danielle did it all in high-stack heels!

She commanded the crowd with her soulful vocals and it was fun to watch her and Brandon trading smiles, laughs, and joy together- you could tell they were having fun and the energy was contagious.

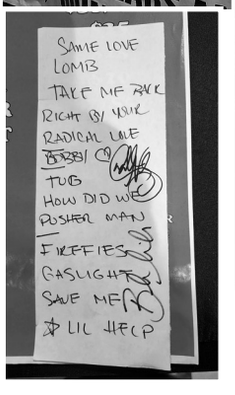


I especially enjoyed the song she closed with in tribute to her late brother, Kris, who was in the Trampled Underfoot band with her, the Beatles' song "With a Little Help from My Friends". A rousing and fiery, beautiful and emotional dedication. The highlight of the night was Danielle telling us at the Blues Society table not to leave until she could sign up for a membership. She did just that! Danielle Nicole Band is now a Sacramento Blues Society member band! How about that? Danielle, we love you, and hope you'll be back to Sacramento soon!










## In Memoriam

*Daryl Bennett Singh, January 7, 1957 - September 10, 2026*

*By Pinkie Rideau*




Daryl was born in: New York State, New York City, Borough of Manhattan, Harlem Hospital. His father was Mohan D. Singh, born in Trinidad, British West Indie. His mother was Laurel Lewis, born in New York, New York

Growing up in New York, Daryl lived at: 369 Convent Avenue, New York, NY 10031. It was a five-story multi-family walk-up building, dating from 1920, with 21 residential units located in the Hamilton Heights (and Sugarhill) neighborhood of Manhattan built in. Yes, the same Sugarhill that the Sugarhill Gang was named after.

Daryl came from New York 20 years ago, landing in Sac looking for greener pastures. He lived a loving 12 years with Cynthia Jaynes.

Daryl played bass with the Zola Moon Band and with Pinkie & Blind Resistance and he jammed with everyone in the Sacramento area at numerous jams. He was everywhere all at once and he will be missed greatly.

***CD Review***

## The Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra, Featuring Willy Jordan - *What Can We Do?*

***Nola Blue Records***

*By Laurel Coppess*




When *What Can We Do?* by the Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra was released on July 24, 2026, their track entitled "Secret" almost immediately hit the airwaves and started climbing the blues charts. With its deep groove and Willy Jordan's strong, smooth vocals as point and counterpoint, the tune was popular enough to spend months on *SiriusXM Bluesville's Top Fifteen* list. While Willy is known around the Bay area for being a drummer in addition to being a vocalist, drum duties on this album are ably covered by member Bowen Brown with Willy sticking to lead vocals, congas, and more cowbell, according to the liner notes.

Those who take the time to listen to the rest of the album will find a pleasing variety of tunes, and those who love the sound of horns will thoroughly enjoy this release. The CD contains only one cover, "You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You", which is omitted on the vinyl LP. All of the other tunes are originals written by various members of the band and their associates.

The first of twelve tracks on the CD, "Still Smellin' Smoke", is a cleverly written, catchy tune in something of a storyteller style where the performer recounts discovering just how many bridges he's burned when he revisits his former home town for a short while before hopping back on the bus. The quick-paced track "You Lie Like a Rug" is about exactly what you would expect it to be about, given the title, while "The Heart Never Says Goodbye" is a slow tearjerker of a ballad with a beginning that seems somehow reminiscent of show tunes. Expressing a sentiment that many will be able to relate to, the track "If It Ain't One Thing, It's Two" is a swinging tune that the dancers will love.

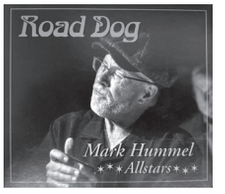
While all of the album tracks showcase the talent and versatility of the artists, my favorite tune off the album has to be the track entitled "Bigger Guitar". If you are as intrigued by the title as I was, however, and are hoping to discover exactly what it is referring to by listening to the lyrics, prepare to be disappointed – this track is one of two instrumentals on the album, thereby leaving your (and my) curiosity unsatisfied. In all other ways, though, this tune is exactly the opposite of disappointing; it is a wonderfully fun jump blues tune where the lead begins with bright guitar, skips over to keys, then slides over to trombone and trumpet before bouncing back to guitar again. If you aren't at least tapping your toes, snapping your fingers, or somehow otherwise moving your body by the time you reach the end of this tune, all I can say is: check your pulse, you might be dead!

***CD Review***

## Mark Hummel's Allstars - *Road Dog*

***Rockinitis Records***

*By Earl Withycombe with credit to Mark Hummel*




Mark Hummel has recorded over 30 albums of blues music since his debut record *Playin in Your Town* in 1985. Rockinitus Record's *Road Dog* is Mark's newest CD/LP featuring recordings from 2024, complemented by three previously unissued tracks from the 2015 sessions for the "Golden State Lone Star Revue", along with a couple of previously unreleased gems. The Allstars on this recording are some of the most revered West Coast players in the traditional blues genre – guitarists Little Charlie Baty, Anson Funderburgh, Randy Rattray, Junior Watson and Rusty Zinn; pianists Brett Brandstatt, Chris Burns, and Bob Welsh; rhythm section anchors RW Grigsby, Willie Panker, Kedar Roy, and Wes Starr; plus bandleader and master blaster Mark Hummel. Six songs are original while others are well-chosen covers.

By this point in a long, prolific career, Mark has shown us who he has dedicated himself to being - an accomplished and widely respected harmonica play and singer, songwriter, bandleader and organizer of his annual touring Harmonica Blowouts and other opportunities to showcase his colleagues. On *Road Dog* we are presented with possibly his best album yet, thanks to the usual potent blend and a key new factor.

Recently Mark has added a formidable new weapon to his already well-stocked arsenal as a recording artist when he began working with studio maestro supreme Kid Andersen at Kid's Greaseland Studios in San Jose. Kid and his studio have captured, refined and elevated a dizzying roster of blues and other musical talent, in between his time gigging and racking up awards with Rick Estrin & the Nightcats. His musical and production chops have honed Mark's music for maximum hard-hitting impact.

The name of this album derives from Mark's three decades of experiences, adventures, and misadventures on the road as a traveling blues musician, irreverently captured in *Big Road Blues: 12 Bars on*

*Mark Hummel CD Review, Con't. from P. 12*

*I-80*. This highly entertaining memoir can be purchased on Mark's website at markhummel.com. Also check out his video interviews of many of today's prominent blues artists found at the same website.

## "The Backstage Break with Shirley"

### *Interview with Danielle Nicole*

*By Shirley McCoy*



This "Backstage Break with Shirley" features Danielle Nicole. We spoke ahead of her August 22 performance at the Sofia.

Her newest album, *Fireflies*, was released at the end of August. Just this last May, Danielle won her 9th and 10th overall BMAs for Contemporary Blues Female Artist and Instrumentalist - Vocals. We talked about the new album, her opinions on Spotify and other streaming services along with the rise of AI in music, her advice to women trying to break into the blues scene, the blues fans overseas, and of course, about what's coming next for her and her band.

**SM**: With your *Wolf Den* album, and *Cry No More*, and *The Love You Bleed* - those all had millions of streams on Spotify and went #1 on Billboard Blues charts as well as on Amazon and Itunes. What is your take and opinion on Spotify and Itunes? Do you feel they do enough for you as a musician?

**DN**: As a musician and an artist, I don't think that anybody should have access to every single song ever created for a monthly fee. I think that the service is inevitable along with the technology movement, but I would love to see it be a lot more fair to artists than it is. With that said, those streaming platforms and the people who run them don't necessarily reflect who I am as a person or where I think money should be going.

We've had quite a few people come out that said, "Hey, I was listening to Tedeschi Trucks Band Spotify channel and heard you and looked you up and found out you were going to be in my town and I came and got a ticket." And then they bought some merch. And then they told and brought some friends. And they come back every time we come back to town. You gotta find the good ways to get along with it and use it, because most of us aren't big enough to be able to completely pull our music just because we don't agree with streaming services. The way that it's built now, it's absolutely necessary to be available on some kind of streaming platform. I'm not a huge fan of it, but at the same time, we've met some cool people through it, all over the world.

**SM**: Do you have any advice for other women who want to break into the blues scene; and what have been some of your biggest challenges as a woman in the blues scene?

**DN:** Well, it's a boy's club just like every other facet of the professional world is. If you're trying to break out into the blues world, I would really understand that blues is America's foundation of music. It was built upon serious hardship and it's something that is worth being respected. I started singing blues 'cuz it caught a hold of me and I didn't know what else to do- I really felt it. If you feel the blues is calling you, the only thing I can really say is truly, make sure you respect the music and do your homework and understand where it came from; what it's about. You can really heal a lot of people, including yourself, through blues, specifically. It's a very unique genre of music and it definitely deserves to be absolutely respected.

**SM**: I totally agree with that. I'm glad to see that there are people like you keeping the blues alive and making a name for us ladies in the blues scene.

**DN**: Yeah, absolutely! Just understand that you're selling something, so make sure you're selling something that you're comfortable with. It is a business, and you are selling music, you're selling your product and you want to be respected so be good at your craft. It's a craft first. And mind your idols!

**SM**: Well, who are some of your idols?

**DN**: I really love to surround myself with really good people. Anytime I get to see Shemekia Copeland, I'm warm at heart. Ana Popovic, I've known her for a very, very long time and she's really just been true to herself and killing it. She's a huge international artist. There's a lot of really great current artists that I cut my teeth with growing up in the industry- one of the players of course, is always Tab Benoit. Thornetta Davis up in Detroit is one of my current personal female heroes. I love her voice so much. Sue Foley. Carolyn Wonderland. Rick Estrin over on the West Coast. I find so much inspiration and joy in so many artists.

**SM**: Your husband Brandon is in the band with you. How did you get together and start playing music together?

**DN**: Yeah, we are in our 12th year of playing together. The Danielle Nicole band started about 10-ish years ago but we've been playing together for about 11-12 years now. And we just celebrated nine years of being together. We didn't start out that way. We started out with no intention of any kind of relationship outside of music or anything. It just kind of came upon us. We didn't even really expect it or really want it to happen at all because it's a difficult situation just being with somebody and working with them and traveling with them all the time. We kind of fell into each other because we weren't trying to impress each other, and we were going through really hard times together personally and professionally. We saw each other at our worst, most embarrassing, most unattractive moments and still managed to fall in love. I'm so fortunate that he's not only just a brilliant musician, but he's just an incredible human being and he's one of the smartest and kindest people I've ever met as well. And we write great music together. Just like any relationship, it's got its challenges, and I'm not an easy person to deal with, but thankfully he's got a lot of patience and we work well together.

**SM**: You'll be playing at the Open Air Blues Festival in Romania in July, and the Blues Alive Festival in the Czech Republic in November. What are the fans like overseas? What has been your favorite country to play in?

**DN**: I've been fortunate enough to go everywhere - from Scandinavia, Norway and Sweden to Eastern Europe and Estonia. I've been to Spain. The blues has really taken me all over the place. They're learned. They study it. They have courses in college and stuff. They study the history of it.

I think one of the things about America is that it's our history so it's very oversaturated and I think socially it gets a really bad rap because it's not as commercially available to people because it's not fakeable. It's raw, it's real, it's a cultural thing. It's not something that you can exploit as easily as a lot of the other genres. It obviously needs a lot more of a positive exposure but I think it's kind of taken for granted because it's just natural here. The access to it is in our history, so it's not to be studied or appreciated as much as somebody who is abroad and actually has a desire to learn about it.

*Backstage Break w. Danielle Nicole, Con't. from P. 13*

It's just a completely different perspective of where it comes from. Probably Germany was one of the places we saw it the most where the crowds were singing the lyrics to my original songs- and not just the chorus, but the verses. And any songwriter knows that, if they're singing the verses too, then they really are learning it.

**SM**: Who have been some of your favorite people you've gotten a chance to play with?

**DN**: Oh- I did get to hang out and jam with Ruthie Foster, which was a lot of fun. I've jammed with her before on the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise and stuff, but I'd say she's one of my most favorite lately. I also did something really cool recently which was the Pinetop Perkins Workshop. I got to be an instructor on bass guitar and teach about my influences and how to play blues bass, specifically, backing up and fronting 'cause I've done both. But I got to jam and hang out with Billy Branch quite a bit. That was really, cool too.

**SM**: AI is getting around more and more. What are your thoughts on that?

**DN**: Being a blues artist about it- it really sucks, because I'm a very, very organic person. It's already hard being a woman in this industry and not being in my 20s anymore, but, now having AI on top of it and literally completely manipulating who I am as a human being- it's a really weird feeling. And just understanding the only reason that it could be used is either to make projects easier which means it takes the work away which means it either takes the creativity or the jobs away or it's nefarious and they're making really gross content, which I've also seen and I don't appreciate. And so, I'm not a fan of it, personally. I know it's not going to be used for any kind of decent purpose so I'm automatically skeptical about it. And the fact that I've seen it, in real time, already used in a negative manner against me, personally; I fear for the future, honestly. There's not enough laws that protect the artist to use it in a manner so carelessly as to create demos, or create beats. If you're using somebody else's tools to create something, you are no longer creating it. The laws of creativity and organics do not ever work in the favor of the artist.

**SM**: What are your hopes for the future? Any plans for any more releases, more tours, any other projects?

**DN**: Yeah, the album came out in August and we've got three really big release tours through November. Then we've got the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise in January and then we're going to have a UK release in February. And Brandon and I are already working on a new project for the next album and my goal is really to collaborate on the next one so I'm going to dig deep and work with as many people as I can. It's a very ambitious project; I think it's going to take a couple volumes but it's going to be awesome.

**SM**: Will it possibly feature some of those people you named off earlier?

**DN**: You know, I sincerely hope so.

## Joel Astley Shakes Up the SacYard!

*by Barbara Katen & Julio Covington*

*Photos by Laurel Coppess & Barbara Katen*

The Sacramento Blues Society crowd knows how to spot world-class talent, and the Sunday afternoon performance on September 20 by Seattle's Joel Astley at SacYard Community Tap House proved to be a masterclass in roots music. Astley brought some Pacific Northwest heat to Sacramento, turning a sunny afternoon into a high-energy blues bash!

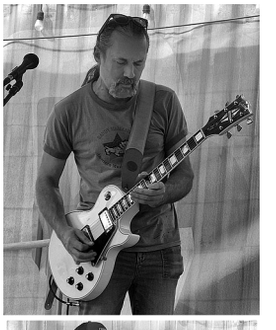


SacYard Community Tap House was the perfect place to spend the afternoon, sipping on suds while enjoying a dynamic performance that refused to be confined to any one genre. The sets seamlessly blended blues, Americana, rockabilly, funk, R&B and soul, mixing Astley originals with some well-chosen deep-cut covers. It was obvious the crowd enthusiastically enjoyed what they were hearing—and that pretty much said it all.





Joining Joel Astley on harmonica and lead vocals were Joseph Barton on guitar, Tracy Wilkinson on bass, and Don Montana on drums. Together, they delivered a tight, spirited performance that kept the afternoon moving and the SacYard crowd engaged.





An interesting side note: Joel and the band made their Sacramento stop while on their way to—they know the way to San Jose!—to record a new CD at Greaseland Studios, run by award-winning blues guitarist and producer Christoffer "Kid" Andersen. Joel's previous CD, *Seattle to Greaseland*, released in 2023, debuted at #7 on the Billboard Blues Albums chart.

When Joel Astley passes our way again, we know where we'll be. And if you want to hear some great music, you'll want to be there, too!



# In Memoriam

*Charles Williams, April 8,1957 - September, 2026*

*By Terri Hutt*



Charles Williams was born April 8,1957 and passed away in his sleep with his pug Bela by his side in early September 2026.

Charles grew up in Tuscaloosa Alabama with his brother Craig, who was also a guitar player in many successful local Alabama bands. Losing his father at a young age was a sad pivotal moment for him.

At the age of 18, after high school graduation, he moved to Eureka, CA, following friends that were attending Humboldt State, in order to get away from the south and the racism which he despised.

He started working in video production for TV stations while in Eureka, making a career out of it as a successful video producer throughout Northern California for over 50 years. (He has a famous story, complete with a video of getting hit by a race car when shooting a race for a local TV station!) One of his top achievements was working with Pixar before their moves, and on their last commercial project which included swirling fun animated Christmas trees for a Tower Records spot.

His passion was playing bass in all the bands that he was in over the years including a blues band called Marshal Law, that was nominated to play live and compete in the International Blues Competition in Memphis. He loved going to live music whenever he could - from GWAR to Iggy Pop, to George Jones and James Brown (always) to Primas and Stanley Clarke, and of course the Ramones, Tom Waits, Peaches, Hole and Neil Young - the list goes on and on.

As an Elvis fan, he visited Memphis many times with friends and family - all during Elvis week, going to the candlelight vigil, and other sanctioned Graceland events but also to attend the many non-sanctioned events with Elvis impersonators from around the world, talks with the Memphis Mafia and more. He would always go to the little local theme park in Memphis to ride the Zippin-Pippin roller coaster - the one that Elvis rode too!.

He was part of the American Roller Coaster Enthusiast Club for many years, going on trips to ride roller coasters before parks opened. He even tested several roller coasters before opening to the public. He was a huge Disneyland fan too and would go any chance he could, visiting Disneyland and the Walt Disney World Resort several times over the years.

He traveled throughout the United States including New York City and Maui, two of his favorites - and abroad to London where he got to see Henry Rollins and to Italy living a full life of adventure!

Charles enjoyed relationships with his many friends in video and music. Charles was married for 11 years to Terri enjoying that time with their beloved pugs Rickles and Spanky along with travel, music and house parties being a focal point in that time.

In closing, know that Charles celebrated birthdays by watching David Lynch's *Erasherhead* every year and sitting on the birthday cake - to great laughs! His favorite birthday line was from Warren Zevon "enjoy every sandwich", of which he reminded us all as he struggled with his health in these last few years.

*Joel Astley at Sac Yard, Con't. from P. 14*



## *CD Review*

## Danielle Nicole Band - *Fireflies*

### *Forty Below Records*

*By Shirley McCoy*




Danielle Nicole's latest album, *Fireflies*, was released at the end of August. We got a few singles released in the months preceding the release that gave a very promising preview of what the full album was going to be. *Fireflies* has since been getting a ton of airplay and in fact, at the time of this writing, has become the most played blues album worldwide! It is certainly, in my humble opinion, a quintessential in Danielle's catalogue as this album goes deep into not only her blues-driven foundation, but explores the unique blend of funk, R&B, and soul.

"Gaslight" was one of the highlight tracks for me. It's a bold stance of a song, with an incredibly relatable message of being unapologetically you and standing up for yourself; not letting anyone else define who or what you're supposed to be. "I've been thinking 'bout what you've been thinking I should be, after much reflection, I think I'm just gonna stay me". That line hits deep and is a perfect message to anyone struggling with their self-worth. The background "Ah-ooh"s just add to the track's undeniable catchiness.

For a real low-down bass-heavy nasty funk fix, check out the track "Dreams". There's beautiful play between Danielle's bass and Bran-

*Danielle Nicole CD Review, Con't. from P. 15*

don's guitar on this one (and even between Danielle's voice and Brandon's guitar) and the keyboards over top of them both makes it perfect. Danielle's vocals bring it all together to make it a smooth and soulful, and somewhat "dreamy" sounding, tight track. Don't miss Brandon's tasty solo on this one!

The title track, "Fireflies" is a beautiful and rousing close to the album. It's a nice little light and feel-good ballad. Perhaps about slowing down to appreciate the little things, reminding us all to do this when it's so easy to get caught up in the mundane day-to-day stresses. "Do you recall when you said goodbye to the fireflies?... I can't think of the time… when did I say goodbye to catching fireflies?" I think that this track is probably the one that best showcases Danielle's vocals- you can feel the emotion dripping off of every word she sings and can tell it's the truth.

Pick up this album and it is sure to show you some love and get you grooving. You can even brag that Danielle Nicole is a member of our Sacramento Blues Society, and we are all extremely proud to be able to make that claim. *Fireflies* has also been submitted for Grammy consideration in the Best Contemporary Blues Album of the Year category, and with Danielle's proven track record of accolades, this is probably just one of many nominations and recognition to come in her plethora of work.

## Good Eats & Good Beats

*By Barbara Katen*

**Dish: Bread Pudding with Whiskey Sauce**

**Drink Pairing: Hot Toddy or Mulled Cider**

**Record Pairing: *Merry Christmas, Baby* – Charles Brown**

**The Dish**

There's something about the holidays that calls for an old-fashioned dessert—the kind that fills the kitchen with cinnamon, vanilla, and memories. Bread pudding is simple, comforting, and made for sharing. Add a warm whiskey sauce, and you've got a dessert with a little bluesy swagger.

**Recipes**

*Bread Pudding*

**Ingredients**

- 6 cups cubed day-old French or brioche bread
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup raisins (optional)

**Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and butter a baking dish.
2. Place the bread cubes in the dish.
3. Whisk together the eggs, milk, sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon.
4. Pour over the bread and gently press the bread into the custard. Add raisins, if desired.
5. Bake for 45–50 minutes, until golden and set.

*Whiskey Sauce*

**Ingredients**

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- ¼ cup whiskey
- 1 egg yolk

**Directions**

1. Melt the butter over low heat and stir in the sugar.
2. Remove from direct heat before gradually whisking in the egg yolk, then add the whiskey.
3. Return to very low heat and warm gently, stirring constantly, until smooth and slightly thickened. Do not allow the sauce to boil.
4. Spoon the warm whiskey sauce generously over the bread pudding just before serving

**The Drink**

A Hot Toddy makes a cozy holiday companion. For an alcohol-free choice, pour a steaming mug of Mulled Cider, fragrant with cinnamon and warming spices.

*Classic Hot Toddy — One Serving*

**Ingredients**

- 1½ oz bourbon or whiskey
- ¾ cup hot water
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 cinnamon stick
- Lemon slice for garnish

**Directions:**

1. Add the whiskey, honey, and lemon juice to a mug.
2. Pour in the hot water and stir until the honey dissolves.
3. Add the cinnamon stick and garnish with a lemon slice.

For a little holiday touch, you can add a whole clove or a tiny pinch of nutmeg.

*Easy Mulled Cider — About 6 Servings*

**Ingredients**

- 6 cups apple cider
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 orange, sliced
- 6 whole cloves
- 2 star anise (optional)
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar or maple syrup, optional

**Directions:**

1. Combine everything in a saucepan.
2. Bring just to a gentle simmer, then reduce the heat and let it warm for 20–30 minutes so the spices can infuse the cider. Don't boil it.
3, Strain if desired and serve warm in mugs with an orange slice or cinnamon stick.

## In Memoriam

*Jimmy Morello, 1955 - July 2026*

Blues singer and drummer Jimmy Morello was born in 1955 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and passed away in Sacramento, after a lengthy illness in July 2026. He is survived by his wife, Marta, and daughter.



A powerful vocalist and super-quick drummer, Jimmy Morello began playing drums at age 11 and formed his first band at 13. His vocal style has been influenced by great blues shouters like Roy Brown, Big Joe Turner and Jimmy Rushing. His mother's record collection had an impact on him in his early years, vocal groups like the Platters, the Drifters, the Coasters, and others. He fell in love with blues music after attending a blues revue concert in 1971 with Ray Charles, T-Bone Walker and Jimmy Reed.

His Pittsburgh DJ friend introduced him to Louisiana Red, who took a shine to Morello's band Cold Steel. They began to work regularly in Pittsburgh blues venues and hit the road, playing the Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and Boston areas.

After Red left for Europe in 1980, Morello moved to Sacramento, California and joined the Blue Flames with Ray 'Catfish' Copeland and Johnny Knox. He stayed with the Blue Flames from 1980-1988, then freelanced for several years with various Bay Area and Sacramento blues bands.

By 1989, Morello moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where he hooked up with the Rocket 88s, playing drums and singing with that band from1990-1993. In 1994 Jimmy was signed with Rounder/Bullseye label with Pat Boyack and the Prowlers. Toured thru the US until 1997, when he returned to Northern California. After leaving the Rocket 88s, Morello toured with former Muddy Waters guitarist "Steady Rollin'" Bob Margolin. Returning to Phoenix, he put together his own band, the Stingrayz, which featured his drum kit front and center, so he could sing and play drums simultaneously, much the same way Doyle Bramhall does.

Morello recorded two albums with Dallas-based guitarist Pat Boyack (with whom he had worked in the Rocket 88s) for Rounder's Bullseye Blues label. More road work followed those two mid-1990s releases, and finally in 1997, Morello got his own album, showcasing his own songs and singing, on the London-based JSP Records. Titled *Can't Be Denied*, it features Morello's kinetic drumming and powerful blues shouter-styled vocals. He dedicated the album to some of his mentors: Big Al Smith, Roy Brown, Big Joe Turner and William Clarke.

## Kels "The Dirty Blues Princess" Show Review

### *Harlow's, September 10, 2026*

*By Shirley McCoy*

Kels, the Dirty Blues Princess. If you don't know who she is, I'm sure you will soon. I came across her on social media, and it seems like most of the crowd at her show at Harlow's in September were introduced to her via their social media algorithms as well. Her show was a prime example of the power of social media and how much of a difference it can make nowadays.



Kels is an independent artist from Pennsylvania who's been hustling hard to make a name for herself in the music scene. She recently put out her EP, *The Dirty Blues Princess*. If you search her on Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, etc. she has a sort of "white trash" esthetic with lots of fun videos shot in the middle of a desert, in front of a run-down trailer, etc. She's been described as a "Southern Amy Winehouse".



Her show drew one of the biggest crowds I've seen at Harlow's in a long, long, time. And the only other person I saw from our Blues Society was Mindy Giles! She can confirm - the house was packed and nearly everyone was gathered as close to the stage as they could be and they were going absolutely nuts for Kels!

She brought a talented band with her, that I hope she'll keep on touring with. It was amazing how the crowd seemed to know every word to every song. I'm no expert in her catalogue either, so I may have not known every song, but she definitely spans a little more genres than just blues- she opened the show with a Johnny Cash cover and then when she sang Dolly Parton's "Jolene", everyone was in absolute love with her! She's funky, bluesy, soulful and had such an infectious energy. Several times she said she had never seen a crowd like that on tour yet- I hope that means she will be back for more- keep your eyes and ears open for her. Kels, the Dirty Blues Princess.

### *CD Review*

## The Womack Sisters - *The Womack Sisters*

### *Daptone Records*

*By Shirley McCoy*

BG, Zeimani, and Kucha. These three sisters' names may not be familiar to you. But the name Womack probably is. How about Sam Cooke? Take a listen to the Womack Sister's self-titled debut album, released in August, and you will not be able to deny the deeply-engrained influence stemming from the group's grandfather Sam Cooke and their uncle, Bobby Womack.



Listening to this album is like stepping into a time machine back to the 1960's and 70's classic old soul and R&B days. The three sisters lend their silky smooth vocals and three-part harmonies to 11 original tracks. The first personal earwig for me was the song "Monster". I found myself humming it randomly every once in a while. "I know I'm not a monster 'cause I used to have a love in my heart…" Each time I listened to the album, a different song stood out to me. I really appreciated being able to understand the lyrics, which isn't always

*Article Continues on bottom right of P. 18*

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*Womack Sisters CD Review, Con't. from P. 17*

easy in some music.

Another favorite was "I Am Your Season". The lyrics on this one are truly a work of beautiful poetry. Last but not least, "All Around" was another highlight. This track is probably the best showcase of each of the sisters' individual voices, and they are all extremely powerful- in a way that can only come from those deeply rooted family soul roots.

These gals are this generation's next girl power group that we didn't even realize that we needed and I can't wait to see what they'll do next. I hope we will get to see them come to Sacramento sometime- when they do, it will be a show not to miss.

*Editor's Note: The Womack Sisters will appear December 2 & 3, 2026 at Bimbo's 365 Club in San Francisco.*




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