

THE BLUES NEWS

VOLUME TWO, ISSUE FOUR

MAY 1996

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THE INLAND EMPIRE'S BLUES AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

the BLUES NEWS

MAY 1996

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 4

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COVER PHOTO: JAY EGENES OF MOJO



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the BLUES NEWS

FROM THE EDITOR

Approching our One year anniversary the BLUES NEWS has grown by leaps and bounds since our June 1995 Premier issue. Not only are we covering a broader teritoery but our magazine has improved in appearance as well. Soon more advancements will enter to make the BLUES NEWS more reader friendly.

For those hooked up to the internet don't forget to check out our web page at:
<http://home.earthlink.net/~thebluesnews/>
There you'll find a data base of blues info far beyond what we can provide here in print.

On the new releases front, Stelie Lynn and Border Crossing's Latest CD "Secure The Building" will be available soon as well as a new one from "The 4th Street Blues Band". I have been fortunate enough to be able to listen to advanced unmixed copies of both and MAN they're good!

The "Nightwork Blues Band" from Glendale is on the scene again and they're tearing it up. I recommend going to see them. Contact Jeff Scranton (818) 843-1289 for booking and date information.

The "Rhythm Lords" have and will be touring the US and Canada extensively this spring but can be caught at the 2nd Street Blues club in Long Beach May 10th and Linda's Doll Hut in Anaheim May 11th. They themselves are recording a new CD, "Lone Wolf." I can't wait for it either.

Don't forget the many Blues festivals which come around this time of the year. Memorial Day Weekend there is the Long Beach Blues Festival put on by KLON 88.1 which is three days long this year! June 1st and 2nd the 10th annual Southern California Cayjun & Zydeco Festival is happening in Rainbow Lagoon, Long Beach. Call (818) 793-4333; (619) 496-6655; (415) 467-7630 for ticket and show info.

THE HISTORY OF THE BLUES

"Lightning Hopkins"

Sam "Lightning" Hopkins was truly one of the blues prolific poet storytellers of his time. He primed the stage and set up a mood with lamentations of whatever was on his mind at the moment, and there was usually much on his mind. He also had the keen ability to improvise song verses. In his recording of "Tom Moore's Farm", he tells a true story of how he and his wife hired themselves out to a white landowner who cheated them out of money and in short treated them like livestock. Inhumane, but common in those days, hearing his angry words about this particular instance is introspective of who this man was.

On one of my trips to the local record store I was perusing through the blues section and happened across Lightning Hopkins "The Gold Star Sessions", Volume 1 (Arhoolie Productions). I had heard that anything you'd like to know about him can be found somewhere in one of his songs, so I decided it was about time to "hear" what the man was all about. In listening to him I discovered something which puts "Lightning" into a category above the rest. In my mind it's like an analogy between the few musicians existing who can play with all of their emotions and those who can't. Lightning Hopkins music has a way of haunting you so you want to hear more, especially when he stops in between songs to talk to his audience and you find yourself listening intently to his every word.

Born in Centerville, Texas in 1912, Sam Hopkins learned guitar basics from his older half brother Joel Hopkins. By the early 1920s he left home and began to eke out a living doing farmwork and playing and singing for whatever change people would offer. There is no doubt he was the successor to legendary early Texas country blues pioneers, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Texas Alexander. By the mid 20s Sam Hopkins was hanging around the country supper houses where he befriended Blind Lemon Jefferson who was already a very popular Central Texas country blues singer. It's no wonder that when the late 1920s rolled around he was playing guitar for Texas Alexander, a folk poet, who by the early 1930s was a well-known songster. One interesting, yet ironic circumstance is that although Sam had played guitar for Texas Alexander at suppers, house parties, beer joints and the streets of Houston and Dallas, he never had the chance to record with his mentor.

About now you might be wondering where Sam Hopkins obtained the nickname "Lightning". His first records were made accompanying a pianist named "Thunder Smith". In the late 1940s promoter and talent scout for Aladdin Records, Mrs. Anne Cullum had heard Texas Alexander and Sam playing on Dowling Street in Houston. She liked what she heard and arranged for both of

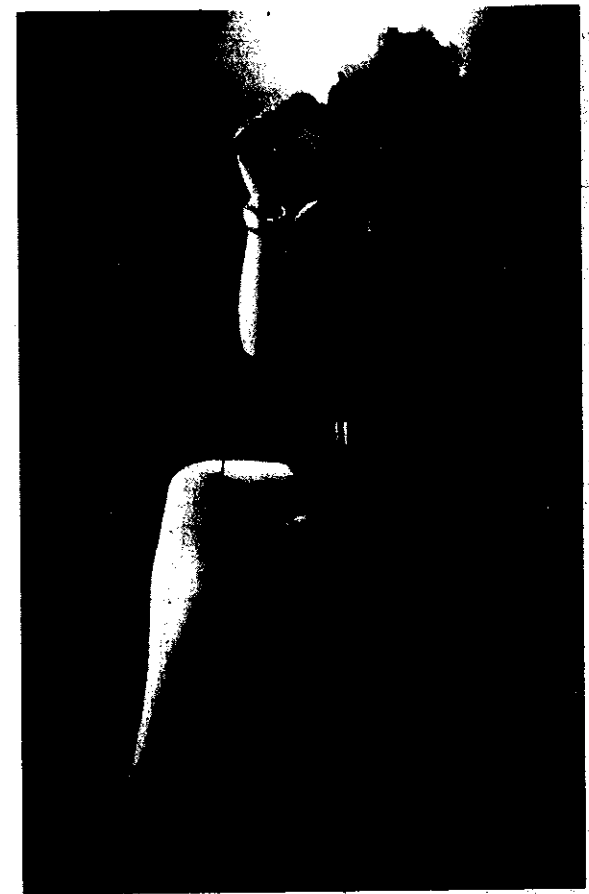


There's a new gal in town with that *Windy City* sound. **Debbie Kay** and her **Southside Shuffle** are lighting Southland stages on fire and turning heads with their performances of soul-saturated energy driven Chicago Blues.

Countess Kay hails from the Southwest side of Chicago where she, as a child, absorbed many styles of music and acquired much of her versatility as a performer. Debbie states she has spent the last 6 to 8 years finding the right combination of musicians to put the *Shuffle* in southside. Now she feels she has put together an awesome band—each member having impressive credentials.

The Rhythm section is made up of two of the finest in the business. **Arturo "The Rooster" Perez**, a professional drummer of thirty years with recording credits on the Epic label, recorded the hit song "Come And Get Your Love" with "*Redbone*" and in the late 70's, toured with *The Righteous Brothers* Las Vegas/Lake Tahoe Group. Other credits include concert performances with *Stephen Wolf*, *The Doors*, *Three Dog Night* and *Lee Michaels*.

The Bassist is a gentleman by the name of **Bart G. Broadnax** from Portsmouth, Virginia. Bart received his formal music education at Norfolk State University. As a 20 year veteran, Broadnax has supported acts such as *Lee Greenwood*, *Joe Williams*, *Sonny Turner* (formerly of the Platters), and has



Debbie Kay

appeared with such notables as *Bruce Hornsby*, *Mel Tillis*, *Sister Sledge*, and *Barbara McNair*. His recording credits include dates for Motown Records and Island Records.

Backing Debbie on guitar is 33 year veteran **Greg Serrato**; front man for the *4th Street Blues Band*. Serrato, a Business graduate from Cal State Fullerton, has played in local bands since the age of 11. This left-handed slinger plays a right-handed guitar—as some would say "Upside Down" similar to Albert King & Otis Rush and has been compared to the likes of former John Mayall guitarist, Coco Montoya.

(Continued on page 15)

CD Reviews By Greg Serrato

Monster Mike Welch

These Are My Blues

(Tone-Cool Records)

Let's see here, we have Brody Buster, Taryn Donath, Nathan Cavalerri, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and now this 16 year old phenom named by Dan Aykroyd "**Monster**" Mike Welch.

What is the blues community coming to? I'll tell you! A healthy musical environment in which our younger brothers and sisters can express true emotion without feeling peer pressure but, rather submitting themselves toward becoming role models to a generation of socially bruised and battered teens who are starving for hopes of a positive tomorrow.

The musicians I mentioned here all have one thing in common. A close relationship with their families. Boy, how our society could use more of that. Monster Mike is a Boston native who says he was born to play the guitar which I don't doubt. The kid truly is a hulk of a player who, evidently, has been listening to a lot of Ronnie Earl, Otis Rush and Albert King. As a vocalist, he's got the tools to carve a lasting impression. Song writing ability? He wrote all 12 cuts with Rhythm Guitarist Leroy Lewis.

Mike ingeniously fuses his thick Texas tone with Chicago phrasing. Titles include *Freezer Burn*, *It Might Not Be Me*, *I Forget*, *Texas Girl*, *Jessie's Girl*, *Looking Back*, *Honest Love*, *Keep On Doing*, *Leroy's Mood*, *Cold Poison*, *Lover & A Friend* and *These Blues Are Mine*.

This debut release is a strong contender fronted by a very talented young man with a bright future.

Walter Trout Band

Breaking The Rules

(Provogue)

Walter Trout is an Orange County Product who has left a huge impression on those east of the Atlantic. In fact, in a readers poll conducted by the British Broadcasting Co., he ranked as one of the best guitarists in the world; voted above Eddie Van Halen, Steve Vai & Stevie Ray Vaughan.

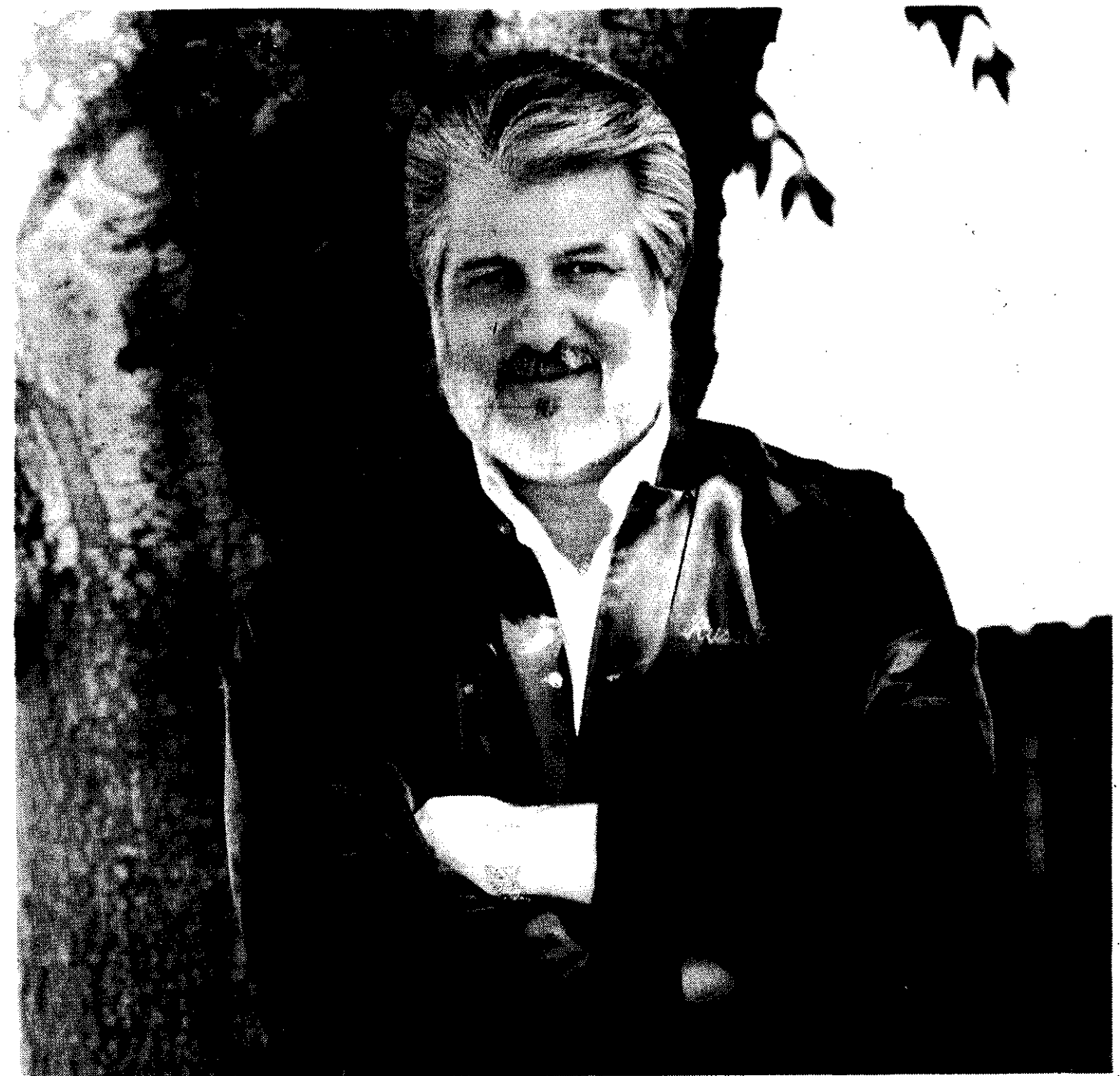
This former guitarist for John Mayall's Blues Breakers and Canned Heat is now fronting his own band, stepping out with his own sound. "Breaking The Rules" is a testament of the acclaim he has received in Europe. The album is a mix of Pop and Blues Rock originals. When Walter plays the blues on "The Reason I'm Gone" he does so with a fiery yet tasteful fashion. The guy kicks!

The ninth cut, "*Put it Right Back*" is a high energy rock-shuffle with note bending riffs that makes his guitar scream for mercy. The tenth cut "*Lady Luck*" takes you to Texas and shuffles you better than a Vegas card dealer.

His acoustic playing is masterful on "*Watch Her Dance*" and "*How Much Do You Want*".

Backing Walter on this fine album are **Martin Gerschwitz**/Keyboards & Violin, **Jimmy Trapp**/Bass Guitar and **Bernard Pershey**/Drums (Note: *We at the Blues News are sorry to hear Bernard is no longer playing with the band due to a heart condition. We sincerely send our best wishes out to him*).

So, what are you all standing around reading this for? Go out and buy the CD at Virgin Megastore or Tempo's Music Market in Costa Mesa. You won't be disappointed. See you next month!



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Local Spotlight: Riverside's "MOJO"

During the Sunkist Orange Blossom Festival many bands performed, including "The Blue Falcons" who headed up an awesome blues jam at Lake Alice Trading Co. Sunday of the festival I was able to see "Mojo" perform at the KFRG stage in front of the Riverside Main Branch Library. These five talented musicians entertained the huge crowd with an hour set full of rocking blues standards such as: "Got My Mojo Working" the classic Muddy Waters tune, "Down Home Blues", Bobby Bland's "Further On Up the Road", "The House is a Rockin'" a Stevie Ray Vaughn number where Vinnie Nolan (guitar) really shined and Georgia Satellites' "Keep Your Hands to Yourself."

They also provided an impressive variety of original tunes. With Harp player / vocalist, Jay Egenes and guitarist / vocalist, Vinnie Nolan sharing the majority of the singing for the band you just can't go wrong. Both boys have had extensive professional experience. Vinnie, who as a guitarist, has performed with artists such as Texas Flood, Lana Turner, Art of Sax and the Buddah Heads. He's got a soulful, gritty, yet smooth voice which carries the blues, oh so well. Jay has worked with the likes of Lana Turner, Jimmy Zavala, the Buddah Heads and Floyd Sneed from Three Dog Night. Egenes' wailing harp and strong vocals (he's been singing since age seven) make you just want to get up and move your feet.

The rest of the band consists of: Sam Gomez on drums, Robert J. Vasquez playing bass and doing some



(Vinnie and Jay)

vocal work as well and George Ree Flores on keys and vocals. I asked Jay why Sam didn't sing too. His reply, "We don't let him!" This newest line-up is the best they've had. Sam Gomez, no spring chicken when it comes to professionalism either, lays down a solid beat which the rest of the guys can really rely on. I really like Mojo's bassist he's got a good voice and has got that funky groove thang down. George on keys really socked it to me with his singing on "Down Home Blues". There's nothing like a keyboardist who can really sing the blues.

Back to the show. They played three original tunes: "Little Red Car" a Chicago shuffle style tune which is representative of the style that "Mojo" has become very strong playing, "3 x 7" a cool rocking tune with a Chuck Berry feel to it and "Peculiar Gal" which Jay says is inspired by Robert Johnson's "38-20". "Robert was apparently a real ladies man, and the famous legend is that he was

(Continued on page 10)

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A book review by Willard Manus

"Billie Holiday"

by Stuart Nicholson

Published by Northeastern
University Press
(617) 373-5481
\$29.95 cloth

"Billie Holiday," by the British jazz writer Stuart Nicholson, is by far the best and most important book ever written about Lady Day. Not only does Nicholson paint an in-depth portrait of the singer but he cuts through the mystique surrounding her life, slicing up all the many lies and myths fabricated over the years by tabloid writers, feminists, Hollywood producers and so-called admirers of hers. What emerges from the pages of this biography is a new Billie Holiday, a Billie Holiday who cries out to be appreciated and loved for what she was, a magnificent artist, not a self-pitying victim.

That will no doubt come as unsettling news to all those who have been content to accept the falsified image of Billie Holiday as promulgated in such biographies as "Lady Sings the Blues" (and the cornball movie made from it starring Diana Ross), and in such one-woman shows as "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill," and in such novels as "Listening to Billie" and "The Heart of a Woman." All of those works exploit the sensational aspects of Billie Holiday's life, the drugs, racism, violence and exploitation, and would have us believe that she failed to rise above these demons and allowed herself to be destroyed by them. The emphasis is always on her excesses, the way she was wronged by a nasty, evil world and was driven to an early grave by it.

the BLUES NEWS

Nicholson will have none of that. As he says forthrightly, "The one great truth about Billie Holiday is that above all else she was a great artist, not because of her tragic childhood and the suffering her hedonistic lifestyle brought her, but in spite of it. Today she has been so consumed by her image that it has rendered her a victim at the expense of her music, the one thing that made her unique."

There is no softening of the darker side of Billie Holiday's life. She did grow up in poverty, was the daughter of a part-time prostitute, even turned a few tricks herself in her teens and always abused alcohol and drugs. Nicholson doesn't shy away from writing about these things, but neither does he wallow in them or let them dominate his biography, the main part of which deals with Billie Holiday's achievements and triumphs as a singer.

Here is where Nicholson shows his skill and insight as a writer. His descriptions of the way Holiday sang are masterful he pinpoints how her natural ear and harmonic sense helped her get inside a song, the instinctive, uncanny way she had with lyrics, the reservoir of soul she could tap into again and again in that sometimes-sultry, sometimes-impish fashion of hers which still sounds fresh and moving today.

Nicholson pays particular attention to the numerous recording sessions which became Billie Holiday's legacy to us, and explicates them in detailed but never boring passages. Here, for example, is how he describes her 1935 Brunswick collaboration with Benny Goodman (one of her lovers) "Goodman's creative heat is perfectly balanced by Billie's cool and sensuous entry that follows. It announces an inherent tension between the rhythm of the song and the metre of the lyrics

(Continued on page 15)

(Cont. from page 8)

poisoned by a jealous boyfriend. But he wasn't real good at actually being in relationships. I suspect that '38-20', about really being ready to shoot a woman, wasn't far from the truth. I really love '38-20', but I couldn't see singing a song about shooting somebody. So I took the same kind of sentiment, about being in a relationship with somebody who won't do what you want and really gets on your nerves, and wrote 'Peculiar Gal'. Then we took the song, that I originally wrote as a shuffle, and gave it a rock beat. Robert (Vasquez) and Sam (Gomez) gave this song a real big drive, sort of the same feel as 'Pink Cadillac'. So I guess it's a synthesis of Robert Johnson and Bruce Springsteen."

Overall "Mojo" is a really good Riverside blues band which merits you seeing them.



SAM GOMEZ OF MOJO



ROBERT J. VASQUEZ

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 Character's Pomona
 Friar Tuck's Pomona
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 Stan's Guitar Shop 346 W. Foothill Blvd., Glendora, (818) 335-8777
 Styles Pomona
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 Warner Records 3300 Warner Blvd., Burbank
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 Huntington Music 6829 Warner Ave, Huntington Beach (714) 848-9280
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 Top Ten 13822 Redhill Ave., Tustin
 Musician's Music 16027 Brookhurst St. Unit-H, Fountain Valley (714) 839-0693
 Warehouse Records 16929 Beach Blvd. Huntington Beach (714) 843-0745
 Warehouse Records Anaheim
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 Cooper's Action Music
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 British Bulldog, Upland
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 The Tiki House 1152 Garnet Ave., Pacific Beach (619) 273-9734
 Guitar Center
 Winston's 1921 Bacon St., Ocean Beach (619) 222-6822 also at the North County location

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them to join her on her next recording trip to California. However, Mrs. Cullum at the last minute changed her mind after learning that Texas Alexander had just gotten out of prison. Instead she hired pianist/singer Thunder Smith to take Alexander's place. When the recording engineer heard Sam's fast finger work on the guitar, he nicknamed him "Lightning" after being told the pianist's name was "Thunder" Smith. Unfortunately, Thunder Smith's recordings never went anywhere, but out of those sessions Lightning Hopkins first hit song "Katie Mae" was born.

During a return trip to California his second hit "Short Haired Woman" was recorded and from there he was urged to promote his records by going on tour and playing nightclubs on the Rhythm & Blues Circuit. There was just one problem - he didn't want any of the lifestyle associated with touring. He was happy to play local Houston taverns for better pay and would also play for country suppers in the farming areas. Mrs. Cullum gave up on him as a touring artist and made arrangements for further recording sessions. In preparing for those sessions Lightning Hopkins took his inspirations for songs from life as he observed it, planning out songs in his head. He sometimes wrote down lines so they wouldn't slip from his mind, but he was also willing to give friends and acquaintances the chance to give their poems to the people. If he liked the ideas expressed therein, he might change a thing or two to fit in with his accompaniment creating yet another song to record or sing live.

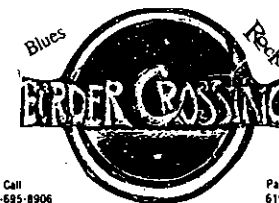
The early 1950s was the beginning of a lucrative era for blues records and the singers if they were willing to travel and take advantage of what lay before them. On his singles in the fifties and early sixties, Lightning played what is called "pricking" electric guitar via such songs as "Guitar Lightning", and play it well he did. One of my favorites "I'll Be Gone" is a perfect example of his versatility in the cross over from acoustic to electric.

As with many of the great bluesman, Lightning Hopkins left us in 1982. He died in Houston after battling cancer, but blues fans all over the world have come to know this man through his storytelling music that will live on forever.

-Cindy Dumas-

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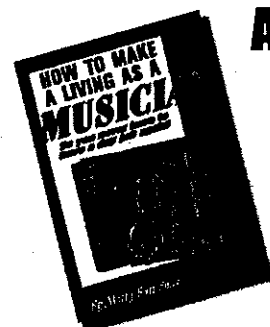


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Kenny Gradney—"Little Feat"

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L.A. Jazz Scene

"...Marty...has written a book that is so thorough, it can take you from being a non-musician to being a session player or a member of a successful band..."
Angel City Voice

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The Musical Director, Keyboardist and Trumpet player is **Millard Jackson** of Queens, New York. Jackson currently tours with *Solomon Burke* and has toured with *Bobby Womack*, *Johnny Guitar Watson*, *David Whitfield*, *Peabo Bryson*, *Jeffery Osbourne*, *Lynette Hawkins* and *Leon Hayes*. His Musical style embraces Blues, Jazz, Pop, R&B and Latin Jazz.

The Horn Section is made up of three very talented individuals. **Bobby Thorne** (Trumpet) has played with *James Brown* and virtually toured all over the globe.

Gerald Gray (Baritone/Tenor Trombone) currently works with the local band "*Film At Eleven*".

Henry W. Alexander is the *Sax* man. His performance and recording history is vast; working with *Billy Higgins* (one of the most sought after drummers in the Jazz world), *Buddy Harper* (associated with Duke Ellington), guitarist *Tommy Tedesco*, T.V. Series *Santa Barbara* composer *Mark Licari*, On the Roots Production with *James Earl Jones* and has recorded on the A&M label. Now, that's a band!

Debbie Kay is no new comer to the Blues. She has spent a great deal of her life with the likes of *Sugar Blue, Jr. Wells*, *Albert Collins*, *Koko Taylor* and has shared the stage with *Joe Houston*, *Osee Anderson*, *Walter Trout*, and *Brody Buster*.

Debbie Kay and her *Southside Shuffle* are on the verge of becoming the next significant act to burst onto the Southern California blues scene.

Recently at *Steve Brock's* birthday bash at the *Off Campus Pub*, this group of talents exhibited what was to be the most memorable set of the event. *Energy* is this band's main ingredient which **Debbie** feels is the crucial element when performing. As **Kay** says "*Be Snappy!*"

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which she manages to sustain throughout her vocal; the melody line, with its large note values, appears to pass by at a slower pace than the brisk groundbeat. As the rhythm remains a jaunty four beats to the bar, both pianist **Teddy Wilson** and bassist **John Kirby** play *alla breve* and it is over their 'cut-time' feel that **Billie's** teasing, behind-the-beat-delivery shows up in sharp relief."

All of the great songs associated with **Billie Holiday**--such as "Fine and Mellow," "Night and Day," "The Man I Love," "Them There Eyes," "Strange Fruit"--are analyzed in similarly expert fashion. The musicians she sang with come into sharp focus as well: besides **Goodman**, **Lester Young**, **Duke Ellington**, **Red Norvo**, **Count Basie** figure prominently in these pages, not to speak of such well-known promoters and managers as **Joe Glaser** and **John Hammond**.

Billie Holiday was much-loved and esteemed by these men (and women; let's not forget **Carmen McCrae** and **Annie Ross**). She also, came in for hard times at the hands of other kinds of men, a couple of whom married her (**Jimmy Monroe**, **Louis McKay**), others of whom ripped her off (such as the lawyer **E.W. Zaidins**). Many law enforcement agencies (including the **FBI**) abused her for no good reason other than that she was addicted to narcotics. She died young and penniless, though her estate is worth millions today (shades of **Marilyn Monroe**). Yes, on balance her life was tragic, but as **Nicholson** shows emphatically and bravely, the down side of **Billie Holiday** is not what we should remember about her. Only the up side, the important side, counts: the success and immortality that she achieved as a jazz singer.

Jim 'N' T's May Calendar

Wed. May 1st	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Thur. May 2nd	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Fri. May 3rd	"The Skillette Band"	9:00 to 1:30
Sat. May 4th	"The Skillette Band"	9:00 to 1:30
Wed. May 8th	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Thur. May 9th	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Fri. May 10th	"The Blue Falcons"	9:00 to 1:30
Sat. May 11th	"The Blue Falcons"	9:00 to 1:30
Wed. May 15th	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Thur. May 16th	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Fri. May 17th	"The Skillette Band"	9:00 to 1:30
Sat. May 18th	"The Skillette Band"	9:00 to 1:30
Wed. May 22nd	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Thur. May 23rd	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Fri. May 24th	"The Blue Falcons"	9:00 to 1:30
Sat. May 25th	"The Blue Falcons"	9:00 to 1:30
Wed. May 29th	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Thur. May 30th	"Karaoke"	8:00 to 12:00
Fri. May 31st	"The Skillette Band"	9:00 to 1:30



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