

BLUESLETTER



The St. Louis Blues Society

BluesLetter

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The Monthly Magazine of the St. Louis Blues Society

The St. Louis Blues Society is dedicated to preserving and perpetuating blues music in and from St. Louis, while fostering its growth and appreciation. The St. Louis Blues Society provides blues artists the opportunity for public performance and individual improvement in their field, all for the educational and artistic benefit of the general public.

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On the Cover

Cool Gus Thornton from his appearance with Marquise Knox at Bluesweek in May.
Photo by Reed Radcliffe



Fundraiser for the St. Louis Blues Society
Big Mike Aguirre with special guests
BB's Jazz Blues and Soups
August 17, 1 to 4 pm

DISCOUNTED EVENTS FOR BLUES SOCIETY MEMBERS

*show your Blues Society Membership card to
receive discounts at these venues:*

BB's Jazz Blues and Soups
700 South Broadway **August**

HALF-PRICE DISCOUNTED EVENTS

13	Harmonica Convention John Németh	7:30 p.m.
14	Mac Arnold & Plate Full O' Blues	9 p.m.
15	Little G Weevil	7 p.m.
17	Stacy Mitchhart Band	10 p.m.
22	The Josh Garrett Band	9 p.m.
27	Doug MacLeod	9 p.m.
29	Joe & Vicki Price	7 p.m.
29	Randy McAllister	9 p.m.

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BLUESLETTER - volunteer for creation of content and advertising representation.

MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH - help sign up new members and arrange for new membership benefits.

EVENT COORDINATOR - help coordinate all SLBS events and work on promotion.

EDUCATION - help create curriculum for Blues in Schools and fill SLBS website with content.

BUSINESS OUTREACH - help get more local businesses involved with the SLBS.

STREET TEAM - help with getting the word out about the SLBS by hanging posters, passing fliers and distributing BluesLetters.

Contact Jeremy Segel-Moss
to volunteer
jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org
314-482-0314



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Musician's Tribute

Celebrating the life of Riley Coatie Morgan

Sunday, August 18, 3 to 7 pm

BB's Jazz Blues and Soups

700 South Broadway



Riley Coatie with Jimmy Reed

It has been said that Riley Morgan was the quiet giant behind Big George Brock's sound. He relegated himself to holding the show down, but his command, authority, and excitement on stage was always prevalent. Riley had Hubert Sumlin's guitar style down pat, but he also excelled on drums, bass, harmonica and keys. He was a musician's musician.

Morgan passed in April of this year at 80 years of age. He lived in East St. Louis and raised five children, all of whom are accomplished musicians in their own right. He backed up such legends as Sonny Boy Williamson on drums, toured with Jimmy Reed and appeared at festivals in the 70's, 80's and 90's. Riley performed many times with Chess Record greats John Brim composer of "Ice Cream Man" and "Rattlesnake" and Brim's wife Grace.

A Musician's Tribute celebrating the life of the late Riley Coatie Morgan will be at BB's Jazz Blues and Soups on Sunday afternoon, August 18 from 3 to 7 pm. Highlighting the show will be a reunion of Riley's original Mighty Soul Family Band featuring his children Riley Jr., Tecora and Tasha and a special appearance by Big George Brock. The tribute will also feature Skeet Rodgers & The Inner City Blues Band, The Souldard Blues Band and KDHX's Tom "Papa" Ray as emcee.

The musicians are donating their proceeds from the cover charge to Riley's family.

tribute story by Jon Erblich photos courtesy of Tecora Morgan

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Saturday Aug 31

Bottoms Up Blues Gang 3000th Gig Show plus Folk'n'Bluesgrass Reunion Show 10PM

Friday Sept 6

Big Mike Aguirre and the Blu-City Allstars 10PM

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THE HEART OF THE BLUES: GUS THORNTON

By Bruce Olson

Thirteen years after he suffered his first heart attack, Gus Thornton, one of the country's best known blues bass players, can finally relax. The beat goes on, rock steady, both on his guitar and in his chest.

He's at ease on the stage again, playing regularly at Beale on Broadway with Kim Massie and the Solid Senders and making guest appearances around town and is generally back to his old self after a long struggle. He owes his rejuvenation to the new heart placed in his chest just over two years ago.

And earlier this summer—just to put a dab of icing on his cake—Thornton was able to meet several relatives of the man whose heart now pumps in his chest; forming a bond with a Wisconsin family based on the music he's been playing for an eventful 50 years and on the health issues that have been so prominent recently.

Thornton, 61, has spent all but the first few years of his life living in East St. Louis, thriving there as a youth then watching it deteriorate around him. But, he stuck with the city and still lives on a quiet street where he has had a house since 1977, one of his more eventful years.

1977 was the year he joined Albert King's band. For Thornton, that meant a road trip to California for the first time and the beginning of one of the most productive periods of his career. It has been a very productive career. Over the past 40 years, Gus has worked with national acts like Bo Diddley, Shirley Brown, Johnnie Johnson, BB King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Bobby Bland, Katie Webster and has played with just about every well-known local band in East St. Louis and St. Louis.

His time with Albert King in the late '70s and '80s put Gus Thornton's name on the national musical marquee. He first met King in 1970 while still a teenager, playing in a band called the Young Disciples, opening for Howlin' Wolf in East St. Louis. "Albert came round after the gig," Thornton recalled during a recent *BluesLetter* interview while sitting in his kitchen on a quiet summer afternoon on the north side of East St. Louis.

"[King] was joking with the band manager, really putting us down. He called us a Sears and Roebuck band.

I didn't know who this guy was. I had seen Albert King on TV and heard his records, but had never met him in person. So I asked the manager 'who is this guy?' and he told me. And me and Albert got to talking a little bit, joking a little, you know. That was the last time I saw him until some years later." Thornton said.

That next occasion was in 1977, when Thornton was playing in an all-night club in Brooklyn, Illinois, just outside East St. Louis, near where King lived. By then, King was known the world over as one of the great blues players of his time and Thornton was playing the overnight gig with Jerry and the Soulful Five, a band led by a Brooklyn resident, Jerry Walker.

"Albert used to come in the club up there. We'd play from 2 a.m. to 7 a.m., come out when the sun was already up. Well, Albert and Jerry would sit there and trade shots all nights. So we got together again," Thornton said. Soon thereafter, Thornton got a call from King's manager who asked him to join King's touring band.

"It was just before Thanksgiving. They were getting going to California. Well, they wanted to change bass players. But I knew the guy and was reluctant to replace him. But the manager, he says, 'well, he's out anyway,' so I decided it was okay. I'd never been to California and here the snow was real deep on the ground. We loaded up the bus down there at the Holiday Inn in East St. Louis and we went on out, to Palo Alto, to San Francisco, and just worked our way back," he said.

Thornton played with King until 1979, took a break to play locally, then rejoined King in 1983 in time to make *San Francisco '83*, an album remembered for its version of "Match Box Blues" and also known for King's return to a basic blues style after several heavily produced albums. That was because King used the touring band, including Thornton, for the record instead of studio players.

That year also saw *In Session*, another of King's best known efforts, famed for the participation of Texas blues legend Stevie Ray Vaughan, first seen on Canadian TV and later released as a CD. By the time it was released as a CD/DVD package in 1999, King and Vaughan were both dead. Thornton almost joined them the following year—the day

after a gig at Fast Eddie's in Alton, Illinois, where he was playing bass in the band Fluid Drive.

Thornton said, "At first I felt cool. But all of sudden I felt really faint and needed to sit down. So I got a bar stool and sat down and finished the gig. Went home. Dave Hinson, this guy from the band, called me the next day and asked me if I was alright. And I was, but not 15 minutes after I hung up the phone I got this pain in my side. Like somebody stuck an ice pick in my side. I didn't know what was going on. Got worse and worse and no matter what I did I couldn't get it to stop. I thought I'd better dial 911 before I'm not able to dial 911. So I dialed 911. The doctor told me I had had a heart attack."

Thornton was given treatment and took "all kinds of pills" and kept on playing gigs, feeling tired and run down. Then on Labor Day 2000, at the Big Muddy Blues Festival on Laclede's Landing, He said, "I was down there playing with Johnnie Johnson, opening for John Mayall. We had worked with John Mayall in New York and I was talking to the bass player after the show was over. I was feeling good. I walked around listened to some of the other bands play, then I came back down to listen to Mayall and I was standing there talking and all of sudden I started to feel this flutter. Then I was having trouble speaking. I felt my face twisting. I could hear every sound in the city. I said to this guy, 'man I'm having a stroke.' So I started praying real hard."

Again, he was treated and went back to the stage, but in just a couple months he stopped playing. The St. Louis Blues Society held a benefit at BB's Jazz Blues and Soups in November that year. "I was sitting at the bar and everything started going crazy. I started breathing real hard. So there I go again. They ended the benefit and called the paramedics."

Doctors then told him he needed a transplant but he decided against it. Then came more years of struggle that included installation of a pacemaker, a couple more benefits and more costly treatment. Thornton said, "the doctor said 'you better do something because you only got six months to a year to live.' That got my attention. I was sinking real fast. Still gigging, I was playing with Kim by then. But I was all out of breath." So he went on "the waiting list."

On April 23, 2011, Thornton got his new heart, the heart of a 46-year-old man who had grown up in Wisconsin and once lived in Wentzville, not far from Chuck Berry's property. His name was Anthony Mather, a heavy equipment operator who liked to play the guitar.

Through an organization called Mid-America Transplant Services, Thornton met Mather's family in June. The donor's sister has a house in Wentzville and it was there Thornton and his family met Mather's family, most of who are from Janesville, Wisconsin.

In a story in the *Janesville Messenger*, Anthony's mother, Rita Mather, said meeting Thornton "affected our whole family. Nobody wants to lose a loved one. The joy [Gus] has received from his new heart had helped me with the grieving and I know it was the right thing." The Mathers recently went down to Beale on Broadway to hear Thornton play and were very impressed by the love Gus generates in St. Louis music fans.

Thornton said meeting the Mathers was very emotional, saying he was glad to meet them and that they are "good people." When they met, he said, "we started hugging each other. It was a strange feeling. Weird. People wanted to feel my chest and his sister was saying she could feel her brother. I felt real good about it. A part of him is still alive."

Gus Thornton is also still very much alive. He feels healthy again and says of the doctors, "They ain't saying nothing about me checking out." He is exercising, eating right and getting his regular stress tests. He still copes with dizziness but watching him wailing the bass at a recent Kim Massie show at the Missouri Botanical Garden it was easy to see he's back in top form.



Photo by Peter Newcomb

In addition to his regular gigs at Beale, Thornton will be playing at a Candlelight Memorial Ceremony for transplant donors, recipients and their families on Sunday, Aug. 25, at Highlands Park just south of Forest Park. The program begins at 5 p.m. with the music scheduled for 6:30.

The band will include Sharon Clark, a blues singer from East St. Louis, who was a singer in Oliver Sain's band and once lived next door to Ike and Tina Turner. She now lives and performs in Carbondale, Illinois. She, like Thornton, has received rejuvenation from a transplanted heart. 🎵

If you would like more information on organ and tissue donation, call 314-735-8200 or visit Mid-America Transplant Services at www.mts-stl.org

Blues To-Do's is a new section in the Bluesletter. Each month we will try to feature an event a day. In St. Louis, that is hard because there are just so many good shows and acts every night. If you'd like to have your show featured in *Blues To-Do's*, email Jeremy Segel-Moss at jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org.

BLUES TO-DO'S AUGUST 2013

Thursday	1	Paul Bonn & The Bluesmen at Hammerstones 8p
Friday	2	Lucky Peterson at Beale On Broadway 9p
Saturday	3	North of The Quarter at Highway 61 Roadhouse 9p
Sunday	4	Kelly Hunt Band at BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups 8p
Monday	5	Hard Tale Blues Band at Beale on Broadway 9p
Tuesday	6	Vince Martin at Gulf Shores Restaurant 5:30p
Wednesday	7	Bumble Bee Bob Kamoske at Beale On Broadway 8p
Thursday	8	Ground Floor Band at Beale On Broadway 8p
Friday	9	Al Holliday & The Eastside Rhythm Band at The Gramophone 9p
Saturday	10	Hudson & The Hoodoo Cats at The Casa Loma Ballroom 8:30p
Sunday	11	Margaret Bianchetta at The Shanti Noon
Monday	12	Soulard Blues Band at Broadway Oyster Bar 9p
Tuesday	13	Eugene Johnson & Company at Beale On Broadway 9p
Wednesday	14	Rough Grooves at BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups 7p
Thursday	15	Soul Endeavor w/ Roland Johnson at Blues City Deli 8p
Friday	16	Melvin Turnage at Benton Park Café 9p
Saturday	17	Pennsylvania Slim at Moonshine Blues Bar 9p
Sunday	18	Tommy Halloran at Broadway Oyster Bar 7p
Monday	19	Tim Albert & Stovehandle Dan at Hammerstones 7p
Tuesday	20	Brian Curran at Broadway Oyster Bar 9p
Wednesday	21	Park Ave Jam Session w/ John Farrar at Hammerstones 8p
Thursday	22	The Catapults at 1860's Hardshell Saloon 9p
Friday	23	Funky Butt Brass Band at St. Louis Zoo Jungle Boogie 5p
Saturday	24	Jeremiah Johnson & The Sliders at Venice Café 9p
Sunday	25	Aaron & Larry Griffin & Friends at Great Grizzly Bear 1p
Monday	26	Rocky & The Wranglers at BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups 7p
Tuesday	27	Bootgrabbers Delight at The Livery Company 10:30p
Wednesday	28	Melissa Neels Band at Jane at Just Johns 7p
Thursday	29	Trampled Under Foot w/ John Nemeth at The Old Rock House 8p
Friday	30	Rhythm Section Road Show at Broadway Oyster Bar 9p
Saturday	31	The Bottoms Up Blues Gang 3000th Gigs at Broadway Oyster Bar 9p



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Saturday	10	Sins of the Pioneers
Thursday	15	Roland Johnson and Soul Endeavor
Saturday	17	Funky Butt Brass Band
Thursday	22	Miss Jubilee and the Humdingers
Saturday	24	Aaron Griffin and Mojo Rising
Thursday	29	Little Rachael Fenton
Saturday	31	Mojo Roots [Columbia MO]

The deli has live music just about every Thursday and Saturday. Lookin' for a taste of the blues? Check out our website for upcoming shows and events!

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Phillip Westmoreland



Phillip Westmoreland has an engaging style of playing guitar, R&B, funk, soul, jazz, and blues. He has played it all with power and grace. Westmoreland has played with and been musical director for world class artists such as Curtis Mayfield, Albert King, Barry White, Luther Ingram, and Fontella Bass. In the early 1960's Westmoreland was a studio musician and arranger for Chess Records in Chicago. St. Louis' own, Sharon Foehner, sat down with Phillip Westmoreland outside BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups in July to talk about Westmoreland's history and his thoughts on St. Louis music.

SF: When did you start playing the guitar?

PW: Ha! I started playing a broom when I was about 14, 15 years old. Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, and later on after we talk about that, other guys. When "You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog" came out by Elvis Presley, we had a round screen TV back in the day. I saw him on the Ed Sullivan Show. I saw Elvis Presley playing "You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog" and it was that guitar lick *imitates lick*.

SF: Scotty Moore, right?

PW: I thought it was Elvis. He had a guitar on, I didn't know it wasn't Elvis. But Elvis actually inspired me to want to play guitar. Every time I saw him on the Ed Sullivan Show I would go in the kitchen and get the broom and act like I was playing. Then I saw Chuck Berry. I saw Chuck Berry doing that little skip he do on one leg.

SF: Yeah, the duck walk.

PW: I was about 14 or 15. Anyways, I kept doin' that every time they come on every week. You know cause back then there wasn't constant TV. It was only on a certain amount of hours a day, and certain shows only once or twice a month.

SF: I remember when TV went off.

PW: Yea, the National Anthem, they signed off. For my sixteenth birthday my mom and dad gave me an electric guitar and amp. This was in, oh, I say this was somewhere in the late fifties, '58, '59 something like that. When I turned 16, they gave me an electric guitar and stuff for my birthday because they saw the way I reacted when I saw Chuck Berry hoppin' around the stage. And Elvis doin', you know I didn't even know whether Elvis was playin' or not. Just the presence of the guitar on the stage. They bought me a Harmony guitar, it was about that wide *indicates width with hands*, big ol' wide fat body and a Supro Amp. We had a huge yard

at my house. So I would run a real long extension cord way out in the middle of the yard, sit there and just play and listen to the radio. There was a car sittin' out in my yard all the time. An old car, but the battery was still good and I would turn on the radio station and when they would play a song I would just pick along with it. Then, when I go to bed, I would take my guitar without it being plugged up. I had my own bedroom as a kid, I guess I lucked out. Anyway, I would sit in there and just hum stuff in my head and just learn. I was playing left handed at first with the high E string at the very top of the neck. It was too hard so something told me to just turn it over and play like everybody else.

That is when I really started learning how to hit a note and how to finger it. I taught myself basically all of it. Just to play a melody on the guitar without a pick. I didn't even know what a guitar pick was, so most of the years I played with my fingers. And I still do it now, on some stuff OK. And then I got idols, Wes Montgomery...Albert King was my greatest idol. I never thought that I would ever be good enough in this business to be his bandleader. He [King] took me to the big time.

SF: That's what's up!

PW: From the little joints out in the woods around Osceola, Arkansas and stuff. We would go out and play just for him to get a little extra money and keep the band up on. [King] would say "Hey Phillips" he called me Phillips, he said "we goin' to New York" and I'm driving the Greyhound bus. Haulin' my band in the bus. He wanted me to do that because I could drive big rigs and such. So his bus was my band's transportation. You see what I mean. We head out, we go to New York and the streets are so damn narrow you could hardly keep the bus in 'em. So many lanes...

We were playing at a place called the Bottom Line in New York City. This was my introduction to the big time. When we went in there they had all these cameras. They had all this stuff set up like we were on TV, but they were taping.

Albert's show at the Bottom Line, OK. We were scheduled to start in a couple of days at Radio City Music Hall across from Linda Ronstadt. I knew then it was the big time. You know, I'm going "Wow! Linda Ronstadt, Albert King

playing across the street.” I had a sixteen piece band. They got a video of it. They have dates on it where I got a great write up in the Daily News. It was the Phil Westmoreland Group - no, I was called Westmoreland Company Band back then. Backing up Albert King featuring the Westmoreland Company Band. But anyway, the article said that I should come back to Manhattan more often without Albert King looming over me.

SF: Right

PW: Because he was Big Boss Man.

SF: Who did you encounter first playing in St. Louis?

PW: My Grandmother.

SF: Tell us that story.

PW: You need to rewind that. It was not my grandmother, it was my mother-in-law!

SF: Oh tell us *that* story!

PW: It was my mother-in-law, who when I left Tennessee, I had been playing about a year. I taught myself, so I was good enough to go out with a band. And this guy had a carnival, he was a black guy that had a black strip show tent show with the carnival. Called Heth shows, H-E-T-H.

SF: I never heard of that.

PW: They were the travelin’ carnival. And they had the big old tent as big as John’s club [BB’s] or bigger, that featured this black strip show. I was the band.

SF: Burlesque?

PW: I was playing like I said with that long extension cord in my backyard and this guy happen to be walkin’ by who’s a bandleader - with the carnival thing. So he offered me a job at this club on the west side of Chattanooga, right, so I go in and all I can play is some Chuck Berry who is my greatest influence with Rhythm. Albert King is my biggest influence with soloing. OK, anyway so blah, blah, this and that I ended up playing with the carnival right there in Tennessee until it was time to leave.

SF: Did you come to St. Louis then?

PW: No, no I was on the road with the carnival for about two and half years. My wife, my first wife, was the singer with the carnival show. Yeah, a singer, stripper, that was the truth. So when I was playing with them, I played for two years. Then I left when she left the show. She had gotten pregnant by me. OK, she was the singer, I was the guitar player, didn’t know shit, I was 18 or 19 something. Anyway, to make a long story short, I married this woman and she was from St. Louis and that’s where the show that I joined was from. I got hired in Chattanooga. So I left home at 17 under duress because my momma really didn’t want me to go. The owner of the show was like “I’ll look out for him, this and that.” So I ended up in St. Louis after about two years with the carnival. I had a kid here and my wife

was here. So that’s how I got started here in St. Louis. I was true to wife and family. My first kid is playing with Donny Osmond. I’m so proud of him, he’s been with [Osmond] for 7 years. I was with Oliver Sain from ‘62 until ‘68 when I was drafted. Then when I came back in ‘70 I got back with Oliver Sain. And the opportunities were right in my favor to start my own band, ‘cause I didn’t like Oliver’s leadership.

In 1971 I put my own band together. I shouldn’t have ever left St. Louis when I look back. I was the hottest thing going. Bob Kuban had a bad-ass band, I still love Bob Kuban, he was a bad boy. Oliver Sain and a few others had big revues, but Westmoreland Company Band was taking gigs without even trying and I don’t try to do anybody out for a gig. I was in demand and Albert King gave me an offer I couldn’t refuse. I went with him late ‘75 early ‘76.

SF: You can’t be sad about that.

PW: No, he showed me the big time. I have had an interesting career though. To me I haven’t done anything yet totally on my own. I helped write the first hit Fontella Bass ever had with Oliver Sain. The first guys I ever got together with here in St. Louis, and I got screwed. My wife’s mother was big time. Her name was Flora Bush, Flora Smith, she was a big time keyboard player in town. Oliver Sain knew her, she told him about me. He came up and wanted me to write this song with him and all that. So that’s how I got to my opinion about being screwed over and all that.

SF: Bennie Smith showed me the double shuffle technique on the guitar. But I have found this technique being played less and less by younger guitarists. What can we do to pass on great techniques to younger musicians?

PW: I just feel like it should be in classrooms. Kids comin’ up nowadays are a lot younger, learning how to play instruments and things. So if they don’t get out in clubs how are they gonna hear the double shuffle, or the this beat or that beat that is making money in this business? I mean for real, so I think it should start [in the classroom]. But they do have music in the classroom in some states, I don’t know about Missouri.

SF: What are you doing nowadays? Where are you performing, who are you playing with?

PW: I’m playing with the Phil Westmoreland Group. I got Eugene Johnson playing on bass, one of my step-sons Christopher Johnson [no relation to Eugene] on drums, I got Erma Whiteside singing and out front, and myself on guitar. Basically we are doing Sweetie Pies and any other gig I can get. I have a chance to get into this new club downtown called Boushays and put a revue together which I’m avidly working on.

SF: Thank you Phil for taking the time to speak with us this evening. 🎵



MIKE ZITO & THE WHEEL GONE TO TEXAS Ruf Records, 2013

By Bruce Olson

Mike Zito is one of those St. Louis musicians who had to leave town to move up the ladder of recording success. Born Nov. 19, 1970, and raised on the south side, Zito learned his blues guitar chops during the '80s and '90s heydays of St. Louis blues, where players like Tommy Bankhead, Oliver Sain, Johnnie Johnson, Henry Townsend and Bennie Smith were playing regularly.

He got his start as a singer; then as a teenager, picked up the guitar and formed a band. He paid his dues and eventually started touring. That touring led to a contract in 2008 with Electro Goove Records and then to his breakout in 2011 when he joined fellow St. Louisan, Devon Allman, and three musical brothers from the South, including Grammy winner Cyril Neville in Royal Southern Brotherhood.

Even with RSB's international success, Zito doesn't like empty space on his touring calendar, and last year put together Mike Zito and the Wheel, a band that takes a delicate, often horn-driven blues approach that allowed Zito to generate a biographical song writing style edging into the confessional.

He and the band made a stop last month at the Old Rock House backing its first album, *Gone to Texas*, a Ruf Records CD that takes a step away from the too frequent inclination of blues bands to blast the customers out of their seats. Instead, Zito and his mates, Scot Sutherland on bass, drummer Rob Lee, and Jimmy Carpenter on saxophone, have given us a record of depth and interest—one that allows Zito to explore his life, taking a gentle approach embedded in those gigging days in St. Louis.

While the CD owes a lot to the River City days, this record is about Texas, a place Zito credits for saving his life. "Texas had been the saving grace for many desperate men. Texas was my last stand as well. I ended up there after running away from all my problems. I left the Greyhound and got off in Texas, leaving my family behind," Zito said in a recent interview.

One of the three records he made for Electro Groove is indeed titled "Greyhound," a 2011 disc he made before joining Royal Southern Brotherhood. That CD showed glimpses of the autobiographical style that reached full fruition with his new band on his new label.

The relaxed, comfortable style of the record is there from the start with "Gone Texas," featuring an easy horn backup and a nod to the redemptive powers of the broad horizon of the "New Spain." That groove rolls along on "Rainbow Bridge" as the writer drives from Louisiana along the Gulf into the Lone Star state where the refinery "is burning off like somebody dropped a bomb and the Neches River is sparkling like the 4th of July."



Even the freight train of a hurricane gets a mellow treatment in "I Never Knew a Hurricane," a lover's lament highlighted by a sad, sad sax from Carpenter, who takes a page from the Oliver Sain songbook. The CD also traces relationships that are like "death row," times of "nothing but trouble with the opposite sex" and the hope that a lover "don't start thinking I'm something that I'll never be."

Then there are the songs that delve deeply into the soul, especially the drug addict's confessionals, "Hell on Me" and "Voices in Dallas," songs that look back on problems with cocaine, whiskey, homelessness and "lying, stealing and cheating." But in "Wings of Freedom," he says he finally learned right from wrong at age 33 and has reached a point where, "I got everything a man could want."

Redeemed, the singer soars to a climax with the great standard "Let Your Light Shine on Me." Zito and the Wheel are joined by guests: Delbert McCintin, Sonny Landreth and Susan Cowsill as well as writing help from his RSB mates, Allman and Neville.

The material was easily digested and smoothly organized at the Rock House, where friends, old and new, crowded the club for a close look at the new band. Henry Townsend once said that each of his songs was like a novel and Zito seems to have absorbed that lesson. Here, the whole album and the whole set fit that model—a biographical novel this time, the biography of a singer whose gone a long way down to find the way up. 🎵

ST. LOUIS musicians directory

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314.662.1857

Bible Belt Sinners

Molly Simms
www.biblebeltsinners.com
618.980.2428

Brown Bottle Fever

Billy Skelton
www.brownbottlefever.com
314.226.2575

Bootigrabbers Delight

Jeremy Segel-Moss
314.482.0314

The Bottoms Up Blues Gang

Jeremy Segel-Moss
www.bottomsupblues.com
314.482.0314

Bumble Bee Bob Kamoske

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314.322.2400

Dave Black

www.daveblackstl.com
314.647.1415

Eugene Johnson & Company

www.eugenejohnson.net
314.537.2396

The Fab Foehners

Sharon Foehner
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Funky Butt Brass Band

Tim Halpin
www.funkybuttbrassband.com
314.623.4504

The Harris Brothers Blues Project

Sean Harris
www.facebook.com/HarrisBrosBluesProject
618.977.7333

Hudson & The Hoodoo Cats

Hudson Harkins
www.hudsonband.com
314.603.5641

Jim McClaren

www.jimmccclaren.com
314.664.3449

The Jeremiah Johnson Band

Jeremiah Johnson
www.thejeremiahjohnsonband.com
314.556.5211

Johnny Fox

www.reverbnation.com/johnnyfox
314.792.4446

Miss Jubilee & The Humdingers

www.miss-jubilee.com
314.645.7220

Larry Griffin & Eric McSpadden Duo

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