

# BLUE INK

MAY 2016



editor's note:

# Until We Meet Again

A mainstay in the San Diego community of musicians, Tony Agosta, is moving from San Diego to Georgia in the next few days. While I do not go back 20 years of having known and played with Tony, this does not mean that, whether he knew it or not, he did not have a very real influence on me both as a musician and a friend.

As a guitar player, Tony always played musically. He was much more than a speedster slashing up and down the neck. He knew just when, where and how to raise or lower the dynamics of any song I heard him play; he knew that spaces between the notes were just as important as the notes themselves. While never a flashy front man/showman, Tony could always be counted on to add just the right touches to most any tune.



Nick Abadilla Photography

Several months ago, long before anyone really knew that Tony was planning on packing up to Georgia, I made mention to Tony that I had admired him for his willingness to sit in on almost any set with anybody. Tony, while still maintaining his opinions, never turned his nose up as being too good for other players I would see him perform with. He played with both the learned and the learning and did so without outward complaint; at least not in public.

One thing I never told him was that, as a drummer, he influenced my own playing in ways he probably never gave a second thought to. I feel privileged to having sat in with Tony on a goodly number of sets in a

number of different clubs. He was often the man I looked

to to provide cues on songs or arrangements I may not have been familiar with. Yep, I know that providing cues is the front man's job, but they don't always do that. Tony did.

It was heartwarming to see all the many musicians who showed up at the Landing this past Sat. as Tony played his last gig with the Derringers, and to hear of the many musicians who were at the Downtown Cafe the week before, all primarily to say goodbye for now, and to pay their respects to the respected musician and man that is Tony Agosta.

This is not really a goodbye as I am pretty certain that Tony will be back to visit sometime in the future. However, Tony, I, and so many others, will truly miss you.

Till then.....Steve Douglas



## Blue Rush Blues Band

San Diego-based Blue Rush Blues Band is all about vintage blues, melding together a range of traditions with a passionate, but polished, energy. The band is comprised of Bonnie Bace, Doug Hartwig, Mark Alan, and Lee "Rock Steady" Cohen.

Bonnie Bace brings her distinctive, dynamic vocal style to Blue Rush. For Bonnie, the blues is a way to express herself and to be part of a historic tradition and community. "Blues music continues to be performed and appreciated globally because it speaks to everyone," Bonnie said. "I'm honored to add my vocals to the many other voices that have expressed this powerful music."

On most songs, Bonnie and guitarist Mark Alan do a lot of traditional blues "call and response," with Mark playing off-the-cuff responses to Bonnie's vocal lines. Playing the call and response style was how Mark learned to play the guitar, growing up in Austin, Texas. "I learned jamming with friends, sharing licks we had learned listening to local blues artists like Stevie Ray Vaughan," said Mark. "Over the years, I got interested in wider and wider ranging blues styles -- Chicago style blues, Delta blues, Jump Blues. And I found a personal connection to early pioneers like Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lightning Hopkins who lived and performed in areas of Texas where my parents, grandparents and great grandparents lived. I love the emotion and the history."





Drummer Lee “Rock Steady” Cohen has performed and recorded with a wide variety of artists of diverse genres, but sees blues as particularly important to himself and to music in general. “The blues to me is the root of all modern day music,” said Lee. “Every day I strive to improve my feel and timing as a drummer to keep that passion of the blues alive.”

As with all great music or great bands, it’s all about chemistry – of the players and the sounds and the music. When Doug Hartwig, on bass, first played with Bonnie, Lee, and Mark, the group just clicked. “The blues, as a musical form, is relatively simple. But, it's not easy music,” said Doug. “You can think of good blues music as a conversation - a conversation that flows and is not forced. It's participating in this conversation that is fun beyond words and keeps me coming back for more!”

BLUE RUSH BLUES BAND performs at Tio Leo’s on Tuesday May 17th.  
promoted by BLUSD and Wicked Harem Prod.

### **The Bluesy Side of Marc Cohn**

By Cathy Hammond

My rediscovery of singer/songwriter Marc Cohn happened during a rare iPod shuffle while in Kona, Hawaii. The song '29 Ways', a relatively unknown Willie Dixon tune, captured my attention with its distinctive rhythm, groovin' vocals, and fun lyrics. Hey, it was the "Walking in Memphis" creator, Marc Cohn.

I heard Marc's live version of '29 Ways' at Tucson and Solana Beach concerts. What a dynamic and surprising crowd pleaser! His soulful and bluesy renditions of "The Letter" and "Perfect Love" were moving and felt deeply personal.

I was compelled to find out more about Marc. I did not just want to google him...I wanted to talk to him. My curiosity wanted to know what this talented and versatile musician has been doing since winning his Grammy Award for best new artist in 1991. I had the privilege of interviewing Marc by phone as it was snowing one afternoon in New York City.

Question: At your concert in Tucson (late 2015) you said, 'If you've been following my career, you've had a lot of downtime'. What have you been doing during this downtime?

MC: Well, mostly raising four children, as you can just hear (children in the background). That's really been my priority all along, even when my career was soaring. My first son was born when my first record came out, so I really had two children at once. When I'm not on the road and am not recording, I'm either trying to write, or I am raising my kids.

Q: What was the first concert that you attended?

MC: The Beach Boys were the headliners, and the opening acts were the Lovin' Spoonfuls and the Shangrilas. It was great.

Q: Who are your blues influences? You recorded and perform a fun version of "29 Ways" by Willie Dixon.

MC: I don't consider myself a blues aficionado. I would be trying to be pulling the wool over your eyes if I started to talk like I was some kind of an expert. The blues that I know and love were introduced to me by other great players. I was looking for a blues song to cover. I wanted to break up and bring up the way my own record was sounding to me. Then I came upon this old Willie Dixon box set that I had never played. I knew Willie's name, and I knew a lot of those songs from other artists. But in sitting and listening to the entire box set in one afternoon, coming up on "29 Ways" was a revelation. To this day I don't think I've done one concert where I don't sing that song. People love it. Although I'm not a 'blues aficionado', Bobby Blue Bland is one of my favorites. It's all about the soul. I relate to the blues as a singer.

Q: You have played, recorded and toured with some of the best musicians of our era, including Jackson Browne, James Taylor, and Bonnie Raitt. And you toured with Bonnie in 2013. What did you learn from her?

MC: A live show has to be in the moment. I've never seen anyone more in the moment than Bonnie Raitt. When I was on tour with her, doing the same set night after night, she sang and felt her classic songs always with something different...a melodic change....always perfect...it was remarkable.

Q: Do you have a songwriting process?

MC: I don't have a set pattern. It is usually the lyrics that drive the song. I find something and then work back and forth to fill in the puzzle. Sometimes it happens together.

Q: What are your thoughts about 'writer's block'?

MC: Sometimes you think you're blocked, but there's ideas going around in your head. It's just being worked through. There's a time to be absorbing, and there's a time to be creating. And it's ok. Wait it out.

Q: What is your favorite key?

MC: My favorite key is F and also D flat. I like those keys because it is like writing for my own instrument. And there is something about the key of F on the piano. I don't consciously think about it. I just do what sounds best.

Marc Cohn is celebrating the Silver Anniversary of his debut solo album 'Marc Cohn'. In March 2016 he released *Careful What You Dream: Lost Songs and Rarities*. It is a collection of songs written before his notoriety. He will be supporting Bonnie Raitt this June on her European concert tour. Stay tuned...

# NEW RELEASES ON CD

## John Mayall's Bluesbreakers 'Live in 1967-Volume Two

Forty Below Records

For those who read my review of Mayall's Live in '67 volume one published in the Blue Ink last year, you know that I loved the incredible playing of those long lost recordings. Despite the poor technology, a one track reel to reel, that the Bluesbreakers was recorded on, the CD was an outstanding production that brought back the intimacy of the small club ambience and a very real connection musically from the performers with the audience. The recording was clearly cleaned up removing most white noise, hiss and other audio disparities while retaining roughness of the performance. It was a fine CD release and one that well deserved its nomination by the Blues Blast Music Awards for both Best Live Blues Recording and Historical or Vintage Recording, which it also won for both categories.

'Live in 1967-Volume Two', sadly, does not reach the same artistic heights as did volume 1. Though the cuts on Volume two were recorded by the same individual with the same one track reel to reel and at most of the same clubs where Volume 1 was recorded, listening to this release was a bit of a let down for me. Different versions of 'Stormy Monday', 'Double Trouble', and 'So Many Roads' which were on the initial vol. 1 can be found here on vol. 2 as well and, for the completist and archivist, they provide a somewhat unique look at where the musicians, John Mayall, Peter Green, John McVie and Mick Fleetwood, were taking their passion for the blues. The other nine cuts on Volume two include a take on Sonny Boy Williamson's 'Your Funeral and My Trial', J.B. Lenoir's 'Talk to Your Daughter' as well as several original Mayall and Green numbers.



For me, what fails me with this release is not the rough recordings, the producers did the best they could with the tape cleanup, not the musicianship, these guys knew how to cook these songs, but the subjective opinion that all these takes were simply the leftover cuts that didn't make the grade for volume one, which I loved. I get the feeling that since Vol One was such a grand success that they went to the cutting room floor to create a Vol. 2.

Sorry, but that 'You are there.' sense of intimacy, found on the first release, just wasn't there for me on this second release. Never the less, as I said, for the archivist and completist, how can you not purchase this one as well? -Steve Douglas

# MORELAND & ARBUCKLE

PROMISED LAND OR BUST



Moreland & Arbuckle 'Promised Land or Bust'  
[alligator.com](http://alligator.com)

'A Promised Land or Bust' is a very fitting title to this new CD release by Moreland & Arbuckle, as from the very first cut, 'Take Me With You(when you go) promises you an eventful journey through the blues covering loss, hope and burning desire for a better time. The majority of the 11 songs are largely all original tunes written by Moreland and Arbuckle. 'Mean and Evil' caught my ear immediately with its kick it into gear drive and power supplemented by great dynamics, stops and their kick ass drummer Kendel Newby who drives the song behind the urgency of the Arbuckle's vocal power interplayed with his roaring harmonica. While the power of the harp permeates most every tune, this is not a release simply for lovers of harmonica prowess, which it certainly could be, but for any lover of straight up, no nonsense blues. Aaron Moreland's guitar work is as driving as is Arbuckle's harp and vocals, this is a guy who seemingly can play anything on his assortment of electric guitars, acoustic guitars and even a cigar box guitar which creates its' own unique flavor. 'Long Did I Hide It' blew me out of the water the first time I played it. In fact, I kept the number on 'repeat' and played it over and over again. Heck, it's playing now as I write. It's as catchy as you get with propelling vocals, drums and guitar taking the song to a place in your brain that must be repeated, like a jingle you can't get out of your head. Just wish it were longer than its' 2:35 play time. Moreland & Arbuckle pay homage to Slim Harpo by covering probably his most well known song, 'I'm a Kingbee', a song covered by more musicians and groups than there is room on this page to list. Moreland & Arbuckle stay true to the song with Moreland's sweet sounding slide and some Arbuckle bringing the song in with strong harp to back up the vocal duties.

As seems typical of most every release from Alligator I have heard or is in my collection, the production values and mix are spot on and exceptionally well balanced. If you have failed to collect any of Moreland & Arbuckle's previous recordings, this release, 'Promised Land or Bust' is a great way to start. And, yes, 'Long Did I Hide It' is still on repeat and playing again. Steve Douglas



## UPCOMING SHOWS

5/6: **Charlie Musselwhite w/ Guitar Shorty** at Belly Up Tavern

5/7: **The Sleepwalkers w/ Los Fabulocos** at Tio Leo's Lounge

5/8: **Los Lobos w/ the Blasters** at Observatory N. Park

5/12: **Charles Bradley** at Observatory N. Park

**Dumpstaphunk w/Aaron Neville** at the Music Box

**Matt Andersen** at Winston's OB

Blues for Peace at the Merrow

5/21: **Guy Davis** at Sweetwater HS: [AMSDconcerts.com](http://AMSDconcerts.com)

5/25: **Los Lonely Boys** at the Coach House in SJC

5/27: **Robert Randolph & the Family Band** at Belly Up Tavern

**James Harman's Bamboo Porch Revue** at Brooks Theater  
in Oceanside

5/28: Blues for Peace Concert at Spreckels Organ Pavilion

5/31: **Leon Russell** at Belly Up Tavern

6/2: **Leon Russell** at the Coach House

6/3: **Jonny Lang** at the Coach House



LOS LOBOS





**Charlie Musselwhite**



**Charles Bradley**

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**Take Care Tony**





