

## **SET 1: TRADITIONAL BLUES “unplugged”**

**Chris LaRose:** Chris LaRose hails from Lock Haven Pennsylvania; growing up in garages restoring vintage motorcycles with his family and friends while listening to music rich in primitive rural culture that ultimately had a unique impact on his music style. Chris' concerts range from driving blues and upbeat 50's rockabilly to soulful acoustic originals. He feels honored to have performed several shows with Grammy Award winning Native American artist Joanne Shenandoah both in America and in Europe. He has recently returned stateside after playing a string of concerts across Germany for international conferences, pub and restaurant events, weddings and other celebrations.

One of his favorite hobbies while abroad was playing street music, which he used as a means to backpack through Germany, Spain, Poland and the Czech Republic. Now home again he is excited to announce his presence in the live music scene and to promote his current original album Switchblade Blues. It is not uncommon to find Chris playing his music at Car Shows, Air Shows, Motorcycle Swap meets, County Fairs, Breweries, Restaurants and many other venues as distant as cars, planes, and trains will travel.

**Stacia Abernatha:** Straight from the heart of Billtown, Stacia sings an eclectic array of styles & genres, with her passion in blues/Americana. She recently performed on Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee at The International Blues Challenge 2018. She is a 3 year alum at The Silkroad's Global Musician Workshop at DePauw University's School of Music. Stacia appeared two years in a row at The Billtown Blues Festival, where she is also a volunteer. Stacia is a vocal instructor at The Uptown Music Collective in Williamsport, PA. She performs regularly as a solo act, and in duos with local musicians & great friends, Gabe Stillman & Sean Farley. Check out her calendar of events at [www.staciasings.com](http://www.staciasings.com) to find a show near you.

**Jay Short:** Calling Trout Run my home, I have been playing guitar and singing for over forty years. A friend turned me on to Sonny Boy Williamson and I was hooked from that moment on. From there I found Light'nin Hopkins, Brownie Magee, Son House, Robert Johnson, and all the rest. I have played in various bands around the area for many years. A personal highlight and great pleasure, was partnering up with the infamous, sadly now deceased, “Blue Willie”. I am proud to carry on the tradition of the blues.

## **SET 2: “SASSY and CLASSY” BILTOWN BLUES WOMEN!**

**Shayne Williams:** Music has always been a huge part of my life. Growing up, it was something I could lean on, as life was hard for my family and me. I remember my mother would hold small little at-home concerts for my friends and I would sing a song of our choice from sheet music. We would be ranked on our abilities to sight-read and on our performance. Singing in front of people when younger was easy, but as I grew to be older, it was embarrassing because I didn't necessarily like the attention I received. I would only sing to myself when everyone I lived with was out of the house. I would lock myself in my room with countless CDs and I would memorize the lyrics to every song. When we moved to PA and found the Uptown Music Collective, I actually began to come out of my shell. I began singing in front of more than one person. I had been taking bass lessons at Robert M. Sides for a few years before I joined the Collective so I was used to playing an instrument in front of people and that wasn't a huge deal. I wasn't embarrassed about that. Whenever I would sing for people, everyone would get this look on their face. It was a good look, a look of shock and enjoyment. It honestly scared me. I wasn't used to that reaction from people. I wasn't used to that kind of attention. When I started at the Collective, I began to feel more comfortable singing in front of people. I began to truly accept that reaction from people and I began to enjoy it. The Uptown Music Collective has given me a purpose and the realization that music is what I want to continue doing for the rest of my life. I never knew what was inside me before I joined the Collective. I've been there for around 7 years and this will be my last year. I've learned so much about not only music, but about myself. Without the Collective there to guide me on my path to being a better musician, I wouldn't have been able to find myself. Music has always been there for me in times of struggle, but with the Collective, I can understand the music and it helps me a great deal more than it ever did before. I plan on going to college to study Music Business, Music Production, and Marketing. I plan on getting my name out there enough to the point where I can become a successful musician. Being a featured vocalist in Fall Into The Blues is an honor because it not only gives me another chance to perform and do what I love, but it also gets my name out there a bit more. I'm so honored to be featured in Fall Into The Blues. This is another big step in my journey to becoming a successful musician.

**Becky Blue:** Becky Blue is a singer/songwriter from the Central PA Valley with a passion for live performance. Her musical journey has seen vocal stylings ranging from blues, alternative, classic rock, and rock and roll. Her journey has also found her opening for Great White, performing with Winger, and traveling South to the infamous

Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. There she auditioned twice a capella and placed third in their best original song contest. She later returned to the studio and recorded her first EP, "Just South Of Florence", in studio A with her full band. Her current focus has been on the blues and songwriting. She is eager to return to Alabama for the recording of her LP.

Becky Blue currently performs throughout the valley as the Becky Blue Band and leads the Thursday night Musical Mash Bash at the Isle Of Que Brewing Company, Selinsgrove. She can be found on Facebook at Becky Blue.

**Becky Wool:** When I was a child, my family would gather at our house on a Saturday night. Aunts, uncles, and cousins would bring instruments and we'd sit around an old cook stove and play bluegrass, country, and gospel. My parents bought me guitars for Christmas, a mandolin, but I was always happier singing. My musical career has been primarily country and southern rock. I started out with All-Most Country and later The Corral. As much as I still love my country roots, I love the blues. I'm very eclectic in my listening tastes, but as far as performing, the blues just seems to 'fit' better. The emotions, the actions, everything about it feels right. My family really inspires me to perform. My dad was a drummer for local bands my entire life and I wanted to be able to perform just like him. Mavis Staples, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, and Koko Taylor are some of my biggest influences. I was looking for a blues project, but hadn't pushed myself hard enough when I was invited to join The Cadillac Cats in June, 2017. I love every show and journey that I get to take in this beautiful musical world and I'm excited to see where it takes me.

**Ann Kerstetter:** Singers are born, not made, and this born singer has a penchant for Jazz and Blues and a hunger for good ole Rock n' Roll. Ann Kerstetter transports you through a wide range of emotions. In the space of a few measures, her throaty voice can slide from soft and sensuous to a deep and raspy full throttle.

*Ann Kerstetter* exploded onto the Central Susquehanna Valley music scene in 1969. At the tender age of 16 she was the lead singer for the Sunbury based "Crosstown Bus". At that time, Ann was the only female singer to front a rock band in the area. Ann and the Crosstown Bus performed throughout the Harrisburg, Lancaster and the Central Susquehanna Valley until 1983.

Upon returning to the music scene in 2007, Ann teamed up with a "Who's Who" of Pennsylvania blues and jazz musicians to form "The Ann Kerstetter Band". The Ann Kerstetter Band competed and won the Billtown Blues Association's IBC Challenge in 2008.

The Band went on to open the 20th Annual Billtown Blues Festival and were named semifinalist at the 2009 IBC Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tennessee.

In the same year The Ann Kerstetter Band released "Classics" a collection of blues and jazz favorites for which Ann and the band received "a thumbs up" review from "Blues Revue Magazine".

Ann's second CD, "Duke Street Diary" is a collection of original compositions by Ann and band mates. "Duke Street Diary" was named an IBC Semifinalist for Best Self Produced CD in 2010.

Always the passionate singer at one with her music and driven to perform, Ann continues to perform regionally with her full band, trio or duo.

**Cheryl Miller (Miz Ida):** Ida Cheryl Holt Miller a.k.a. "Miz Ida" has been a staple in the local blues scene for the past 25 years. Cheryl's silky smooth vocal style along with her wonderful rapport with her audience brings a truthful and sincere presence to her stage performances. As a child she listened constantly to the old standards that were being played on local AM radio stations and her vocal style reflects the later days of the swing and jazz era. A music lover of all genres but never a performer, her world changed the night she accompanied one of her friends to a blues jam session; The venue was known to area musicians as "The Juke" and it truly was in the style of the southern juke joints that people have read about. She was instantly smitten by the music, the atmosphere and the musicians who were playing. The moment they handed her a microphone to join in, she was introduced to her blues musical destiny. From that first night at The Juke she moved on to front several area bands including Blues Inc., Mo' Blues, Blues & Gasoline and her current band Miz Ida & the All-Nightas. In 2002 Blues & Gasoline and in 2011 Miz Ida & the All-Nightas were chosen to represent The Billtown Blues Association at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tennessee. This was truly an honor to be playing on the same stages as some of the past and present blues musical greats have performed.

Besides performing with Miz Ida & the All-Nightas she is recently singing with an acoustic trio, Mystery Trayne. To her this is a more personal venture into music but by the same token she loves the full band sound into which she was first groomed.

"I feel that I have been very blessed to have the opportunity to sing and express myself through music and there is no better way to do it than singing the blues! "

### **SET 3: THE INCREDIBLE BLUES HARP!**

**John Sweeney:** John Sweeney is a harmonica player, a singer and a guitarist. He plays electric and acoustic, traditional and progressive blues. He has big ears and draws from all the music he loves, sources too numerous to list. His style is rhythmic and groove based. He builds off many of the great harp players of the past. His edgy vintage sound captures the ear and satisfies the soul! John has played extensively throughout Pennsylvania. You can hear him play solo, and in two duos: the SOS Blues Duo with Mike Sallows, and Rosencrans and Sweeney. With Tom Rosencrans. John also leads a band, the Sweeney Blues Revue. John also does some music writing for the Local Music Collective, and does Blues in the Schools programs through Destination Blues' "Backstage Pass to the Blues" program. He promotes for King Street Coffeehouse, and also helps with the Destination Blues Festival. He's played harmonica on recent albums by Leo Armbruster, and by Tommy Patten. It's a good thing that the blues aren't illegal, or he'd be in jail, for sure!

**Dave Thompson:** Dave Thompson's life changed the day an Air Force buddy gave him a copy of Muddy Waters' "Hard Again" album, featuring legendary blues harpist James Cotton. After his discharge from the military, Thompson, inspired by Cotton's gritty power, walked into his hometown music store and laid down \$3.99 for an American Ace harmonica.

Initially influenced by legends such as Cotton, Sonny Boy Williamson II and Junior Wells, Thompson's style also borrows from modern players such as Paul Butterfield, William Clarke and Charlie Musselwhite.

Always seeking to expand his grasp of the instrument, Thompson often travels to Mississippi to learn from some of the world's top players. He competed in the 2011 International Blues Challenge in Memphis as a member of Miz Ida and the All-Nightas and currently can be heard performing in the Williamsport area as a member of the Cadillac Cats.

**Matt Gartner:** Matt Gartner began playing harp late in life, back in 1988 after graduating from Lycoming College. A former saxophone player, he first played in limited sets for the Binghamton based group Friends and then locally with the band Brothers and Others. Three years later he landed a full time position in the group North Country, which toured most of the Northeastern US, highlighted by appearances headlining for some of the biggest recording stars in the country. Gartner has also toured with Nashville based former Atlantic and Warner Brothers recording artist Kristin Hill. In the last five years Gartner has gotten back to his rock/blues roots by featuring at the Uptown Music Collective's main stage performances at the Community Arts Center. Having worked predominantly with strong feature vocalists, he plays with a "more is less approach", even when playing the blues. "I learned quickly early on not to step on the vocalist or other leads, rhythm harp is as important as taking a lead in my opinion." His influences include music and artists across many platforms and his harp heroes are Charlie Musselwhite, John Butterfield, James Cotton, Jerry Portnoy and even Mickey Raphael. Matt Gartner lives in Williamsport where he runs Impact Advertising and Video and is the father of two talented children Mitchell (former Black Strat Blues and IBC performer) and Layla.

**Shawn Strickland:** Shawn Strickland's musical heritage runs deep weaving through a very musical family dating back generations and is the great-grandson of renown bluegrass fiddler, Clay "Red" Edwards. Shawn was born in Williamsport but raised in Norfolk, VA. Shawn moved back to PA in his later high school years. First performing live at 16 with his father's Southern Rock band "Triple Shot". After traveling throughout his early 20's and then settling back in Williamsport, he formed the local blues-rock band "The Dirty Mojo Blues Band" with his father Gary Strickland. The Dirty Mojo Blues Band has been a prominent fixture on the local and regional music scene for the last decade. Shawn also performs solo and with his duo "Mini Mojo" which has competed multiple times at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, TN. He was a finalist in the 2018 International Songwriting Competition with his composition "Honey Bee". The Dirty Mojo Blues Band's CD, "Made Cents at the Time" was a semifinalist in the 2018 International Blues Challenge best self produced CD category. Shawn is currently an endorsee for Seydel Harmonicas.