

Blues Bytes

What's New

May 2025



Christopher Wyze & the Tellers (Wyze – lead vocals/harmonica, John Boyle – guitars, Gerry Murphy – bass, Mark Yacovone – keyboards, Douglas Banks – drums, Ralph Carter – backing vocals/percussion, Irene Smits – backing vocals) follow up their successful debut album, *Stuck In The Mud*, with a live set captured at the Juke Joint Chapel music hall at the Shack Up Inn in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The CD/DVD set, *Live In Clarksdale* (Big Radio Records), includes ten songs, eight from the band's debut release, plus two blues classics originally cut by Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell.

The eight original songs, written by Wyze with Carter, Murphy, or Cary Hudson, all charted on the Roots Music Report (RMR) chart, and they include "Three Hours From Memphis," "Back To Clarksdale," "Money Spent Blues," "Hard Work Don't Pay," "Stuck In The Mud," "Cotton Ain't King," "Looking For My Baby," and "Good Friend Gone." Wyze and the Tellers faithfully and energetically recreate these tunes, and the production gives the listener (and the viewer) the feeling that they're sitting on the front row.

The two Carr/Blackwell covers, "How Long, How Long Blues" and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," are both well done. Carr and Blackwell recorded the former tune in 1928 and Blackwell recorded the latter in 1961, both in Indianapolis. That's where where Wyze and a couple of the band members call home, so these tracks have sentimental value.

The DVD includes the live performance of the songs on the CD, but there is also a cool feature video with Wyze traveling through Clarksdale, giving viewers a useful guided tour of the city. The tour includes a visit to the Shack Up Inn, the Clarksdale Tourism Department (with Bubba O'Keefe, who has played a big role in the city's recent development), Cat Head Records (with Roger Stolle, who needs no introduction here), Ground Zero Blues Club, and Deak Harp's harmonica shop, as well as several restaurants and the Delta Blues Museum. It provides a great guideline for anyone unfamiliar with the city, and Wyze has a blast giving the tour.

Blues fans (both newcomers and hardened vets) will get a kick out of *Live In Clarksdale* for the music and the information. Thanks to Christopher Wyze & the Tellers for putting this together.

— Graham Clarke