



**Christopher Wyze & the Tellers - *Live In Clarksdale***

**Big Radio Records**

[www.christopherwyze.com](http://www.christopherwyze.com)

**DVD/CD**

**DVD 41:59 show, 51:29 film**

**CD 10 tracks/41 minutes**

**Christopher Wyze began his musical journey** after meeting producer Ralph Carter at a blues gathering in Clarksdale in 2012. Carter eventually pushed Wyze into writing songs and leaving his cover band life of over two decades. Carter was co-writer, bass player and tour director for Eddie Money and then later landed gigs with NBC, Showtime and a variety of Los Angeles based recording artists. In 2020 he produced and played with 2020 B.B. King Entertainer of the Year and Grammy-nominated Sugaray Rayford.

Wyze was an ad man, author, journalist and storytelling writer for over 40 years before embarking on a 20-year cover band career. His hooking up with Carter pushed him to write songs and they formed a band that produced their initial album of all original cuts written in 2022 and recorded in 2023 at Muscle Shoals. They got back together in Clarksdale for this live recording last October.

Wyze handles lead vocals and harp. Carter is backing vocalist on all but one cut. John J.B Boyle is on electric and slide guitars. Gerry Murphy is on electric bass. Mark Yacovone is on keys. Douglas Banks handles the drums. Irene Smits backs vocals on one track.

I started with the DVD concert, recorded 10/1/25. The concert is pretty much the same as the CD's 10 cuts. "Three Hours from Memphis" opens the show. It's a rocking blues. Nice guitar, pretty soloing. The keyboards are well done. The vocals are clean and clear in a steady metered delivery. The second track was the top song from their inaugural release "Stuck In The Mud." It's entitled "Back To Clarksdale" and pays homage to the unofficial southern capital of the blues. Wyze continues his deliberate delivery style and the band

supports in great form. I like the keys and guitar work and the songs all tell a story. Next is “Money Spent Blues” where Wyze bemoans his relational cash woes with grit. More nice guitar solo work and tight keys.

Wyze breaks out his harp on “Hard Work Don’t Pay” and sings about his blues over working hard every day in his deep baritone. Selling one’s soul and losing one’s sense of right and wrong are the culmination of one’s life working for the man. Boyle gives us some pretty slide to savor and Yacovone continues to shine on organ. Wyze gets emotional over his described job frustrations in his delivery. “Stuck In The Mud” follows, a song about being stuck in the mud after the flood. Irene Smits provides backing vocals on this one and does a good job. Wyze continues to blow dirty harp. The theme here is pretty much a continuation of the prior cut’s downtrodden woes and blues. J.B. continues to shine on guitar.

“Cotton Ain’t King” is the next cut, a cut about the crop that made the South. The slide helps make this one enticing. Wyze sings about how king cotton gave us the blues which is the real king, not the fluffy white stuff that was picked by overworked human labor. Next is “Looking for My Baby.” He’s searching for his woman, asking for help in finding his baby. By song’s end she’s still not found, but Wyze seems to have hope.

“Good Friend Gone” is a biographical cut about Wyze’s origins in Indiana near Illinois. His upbringing with his friends apparently didn’t comply with school or parental rules, let alone preachers and the law. They shirked job and hung with the wrong crowd, resulting in what the song title says. There’s no specificity as to how the good friend was gone, but jail appears to be the better choice than what his buddy got. “How Long, How Long Blues” is a tribute to Scrapper Blackwell in this Leroy Carr classic. Nice piano licks abound along with the guitar soloing. Wyze croons on here in the first of two covers. They finish with another Scrapper Blackwell cut, this time a later Jimmie Cox tune “Nobody Knows You When You’re Down and Out.” This slow ballad again features cool piano as it’s just Wyze and Yacovone on stage. It’s a pretty conclusion to the show.

Also on the DVD is another 51 and a half minutes or so of Wyze taking us on a tour of The Shack Up Inn on the old Hopson Plantation. Inside the Shack Up Inn is The Juke Joint Chapel, a bar and music venue. Wyze takes us on a tour of the joint and notes many of the accoutrements in the facility.

He takes us on a tour of Clarksdale. He stops at the historical marker of the Tutwiler Train Station honoring W.C. Handy. He visits Sonny Boy II’s gravesite before hitting the Coahoma County Tourism Office in Clarksdale, a definite stop if you visit Clarksdale before hitting the Museum and other stops. Wyze talks with Bubba O’Keefe who runs the Office.

Next stop is the cool Cathead Records and interview with owner Roger Stolle telling the story of Clarksdale and music. The Stone Pony Pizza and Restaurant is noted before stopping at Hambone's Art Gallery and Music venue. On Yazoo Street is the Bluesberry Café and the Yazoo Pass restaurant. The big attraction is Ground Zero Blues Club, Morgan Freeman's super joint.

He ends day one at the Shack Up Inn, then starts the next day at the intersections of highways 61 and 49. He goes across the street to Abe's Barbeque, a famous joint. Red's Juke Joint/Blues Club is next. Hooker Grocery and Eatery stop follows before hitting Deak's Mississippi Saxophone Shop, owned by Deak Harp. He sells, repairs and builds harps. He concludes his tour at the Delta Blues Museum, a definite stop for all blues tourists.

It's an interesting show and Clarksdale tour video. Wyze's vocals are deep, gritty and have a very matter of fact pacing, The band is tight and the songs are nicely done blues that tell stories. Wyze and company are devoted to their craft and work hard at doing authentic blues.

*Blues Blast Magazine Senior writer Steve Jones is president of the Crossroads Blues Society and is a long standing blues lover. He is a retired Navy commander who served his entire career in nuclear submarines. In addition to working in his civilian career since 1996, he writes for and publishes the bi-monthly newsletter for Crossroads, chairs their music festival and works with their Blues In The Schools program. He resides in Byron, IL.*

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