



The Ward Bond Show – The Secret Behind Christopher Wyze’s Blues Success!

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WB = Ward Bond. CW = Christopher Wyze

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WB: My guest today is Christopher Wyze of Christopher Wyze & the Tellers Blues Band. Now, earlier this year, they won the coveted RMR top 40 blues album of the year. And with that prize, Christopher Wyze & The Tellers became one of just three debut artists to crack the RMR's top 40 out of the top 200 albums they ranked for 2024. Now, fresh off their recording sessions in Muscle Shoals and the

Mississippi Delta, Christopher Wyze & the Tellers jolted onto the global blues scene with Stuck in the Mud, their 13-track debut album

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of all original music. But we have a brand-new album to talk about today. So, let's welcome blues extraordinaire Christopher Wyze and his newest album, Live in Clarksdale, to the show. Welcome, Christopher.

CW: Oh, it's great to be here, Ward. Wow, that's a great intro. I appreciate it. My mother will love that.

WB: Well, you deserve it. I fell in love with this brand-new live album. But how long have you been playing the blues?

CW: I've been playing the blues about 20 years. Before that I did all sorts of things. I was a writer and an advertising guy which really has helped me as it comes now to writing music and so been in music a long time but just started writing my own stuff and put the Tellers together to do our albums. So, we've got two of them out there now.

WB: Is it true that Christopher Wyze and the Tellers was originally a studio project?

CW: Exactly. Yes. We went into the studio in Muscle Shoals in 2022 and at the time we didn't even know what we were going to do with the record. We thought hey we got a great group of songs, their original songs I wrote with my producer Ralph Carter and a couple other guys and he interviewed and auditioned the session players. We put the album together and we thought, "Hey, great. This is fun. I don't know what we're going to do with it. But once people started hearing it, it's like, hey, we got to get this thing out there. It turned into signing a record deal with

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Big Radio Records in Memphis, Tennessee. a company that was started it's called Select-O-Hits. That's the company by Sam Phillips, who we were just talking about, Elvis. So, Sam Phillips started this company that I'm the on the record label. And Johnny Phillips, his nephew, is my guy. That's who signed me to Big Radio Records. So, once that record got going and you mentioned it did it did very nicely around the world on the blues charts, we really hadn't performed as a band.

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Because as you said, we were a studio project. So, here we are. This record's done well. We're getting followers. We're getting listeners. We've got to do something to keep the momentum going. So, we decided to do a live show and a live album. It was our first show and performance as a band together and we just rolled the dice and said, "Let's film it, let's record it, and let's release it as our second album, which came out here in 2025."

WB: So, what led you to actually record the first album in Mus Muscle Shoals?

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CW: I'll tell you a little bit of the story. I met my cowriter Ralph Carter in Clarksdale, Mississippi. So, I was playing in and we did the blues and I began to learn the harmonica. I thought I've got to contribute a little bit. You know, the singer doesn't do much, right? He just sings. The real musicians are around me, right? So, I thought 've got to I got to learn the harmonica. I discovered there was a harmonica camp in

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Clarksdale, Mississippi. You go, Ward, for a week and learn the harmonica. Now, some people there buy their harmonica on the way down to the camp and others like myself, they might be playing in bands and so forth and they want to pick up a new instrument. That was really me. I met Ralph Carter there. I've said his name a couple of times, but Ralph became my producer. Well, Ralph in his younger days was kind of rock and roll royalty. He played and wrote songs with Eddie Money and was his tour musical

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director. So Ralph and I just kind of hit it off when I showed up in Clarksdale to learn harmonica. He was one of the instructors. Long story short, maybe the first time I was there — and I went several times over several years — he said, "Hey, you can do this. You need to start writing your own music." And I was like, "Wow, I'm in a cover band. Wow. I don't know. Maybe...whatever." And maybe the next year I saw him. He's like, "How you coming on the music?" He goes,

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"We're going to do an album someday." I said, "Man, I'd love to be on your album. That'd be great, Ralph." He's like, "No, it's going to be your album and it's going to be your songs." So, he kept after me for a couple of years. And one day, I may have mentioned I was an advertising guy. I owned an advertising agency. So, I'm reading the Wall Street Journal like every good blues man, right? No. So, I'm reading the Wall Street Journal one day. There's

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an article in there about a new recording studio in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, where you go, you stay, the musicians stay in the studio upstairs. It's an old mansion, been remodeled, and you make music, you hang out the whole week there. They cook food for you and so forth. So, I read this article. I snapped a picture of it on my iPhone and I texted it over to Ralph. I said, "Hey, here's where we're going to make our record." And I was just kidding. and he came back and said, "Okay, let's do

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it." And that was it. In 2022, we talked on the phone. We agreed, let's meet in Clarksdale, Mississippi in a few months. And in the meantime, in the interim, Chris would write songs and then I'd meet Ralph and we'd turn them into songs. And about 12 weeks later, we did. We met for three days in Clarksdale, Mississippi. We had already booked the studio in Muscles Shoals. I don't know, we were crazy. We thought we can do this. But he'd been

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through it before. He knows how this works. And I had a lot of confidence in him. So, we booked the studio in Muscle Shoals. That's kind of how it came to be. It started out as a bit of a joke...read about it in an article and then, you know, I don't know, three, four months later, there we were. Monday morning, I meet the band. Never met these guys before. I knew Ralph. I took my bass player Gerry Murphy with me from my cover band and we had Eric Deaton who I'd met before in

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Clarksdale, Mississippi playing guitar and then a couple session guys from Muscle Shoals. Ralph was our producer and you know these songs that he and I wrote and developed, we did it on a picnic table at the Shackup Inn in Clarksdale, Mississippi on my iPhone. So these songs didn't exist. It's not like we were out playing them and then we went in the studio and recorded them. They really didn't exist. So, to come together on a Monday morning and have a great producer there to say we're going

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to build these songs from just very scratchy demos was a great experience. Five days later, we walked out with the whole album and this thing's been going fast forward since that day.

WB: You know, I read some of the backstory and to know that you were a copywriter.

CW: Yeah.

WB: It would just kind of make sense that writing a song would be easy. But going from a copywriter to a songwriter wasn't easy at all, was it?

CW: Well, in addition to writing copy, I've also got five books that are in

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print that I've written. So, I write a lot of stuff. I was a newspaper writer. I was a magazine writer. I was an advertising writer. And I'm a book writer. And so, you know, Ward, by the time I was called upon to write songs, I already brought a couple things to the table. One, I know how to write. And I got that. I'd been playing in a band for 15 years and been the front man out in front playing the blues and rock and roll. So, I kind of got how that all worked. As a kid, I sang and I

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was on stage and all this kind of stuff. So, I had a little bit of that in me, too. So, you said, "Well, it really was kind of hard, wasn't it?" I don't think it really was that hard because of all the background that I had when I showed up and said, "Let's write." And keep in mind, when you write for a newspaper or you write for a magazine or you're an ad guy, there's a deadline and you hit the deadline. And so, Ralph and I said, "We're going to meet in 12

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weeks. I'll bring 15 songs with me." It's like, "Hey, that's Pavlov's dog for me." The bell goes off. I've got 15 songs to write and I wrote them. The trick for me is having an idea, because I'm used to

writing non-fiction stuff. All my books are non-fiction. Some of these (songs) are fictional or at least they feel fictional. They might be sort of autobiographical and some of them are. But the word part wasn't the struggle. It was really once I have an idea and I kind of know the way the

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blues works and the pattern and so forth. But it's pretty good to write 200 words instead of 40,000 for a book.

WB: You know, I love that story because a very dear late friend of mine was a famous copywriter. He was also a film director, but his background was English literature. So, it just all came natural to him. And to see you as a copywriter a successful one and then to just come up with I guess ideas and lines or a lyric and then to have someone like Ralph Carter just come in

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and look at it and just kind of I guess paint the overall picture for each piece you brought.

CW: Yeah. And we went to Clarksdale, Mississippi. And Ward, you may know that's kind of where the blues came from. WC Handy quote discovered the blues in 1903 just outside of town there at the train station in Tutwiler. And so I mean that is Bluesville, USA, and really for the whole world. If you and I went down there today, half the people walking down the street would be from probably Europe. They come from all over

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the world. So you can't help but feel the blues and drink in the blues and just have the blues when you go to Clarksdale. So for Ralph and I to go there, that was the perfect place to make these songs. I later attended a songwriting camp with him. He does songwriting camps there (and) guitar camps. It's a great place to get away and just focus on the music. And the process was amazing. Ralph would say, "Okay, get out your lyrics." Like, "Okay, here we go. All right, Ralph,

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what do we do? You know how to write songs. I wrote the lyrics." And he'd say, "Read it to me." I thought that was real interesting. So, let's take the song Three Hours from Memphis, which I wrote. I would read him the song and, you know, interestingly enough, because I wrote it, I would give inflection and I would certainly try to shape the story in the way I narrated it. And he had a guitar in his hand. He goes, "Wait a minute, that sounds kind of like this." And that's the way this

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process went. And he's such a great musician. He actually has a recording studio in Ventura, California. He plays bass, he plays guitar, he plays piano, he plays drums. So some of the music he creates he's done for TV and film and so forth. He'll do many of the instrument on a recording. So he's a he's a real multi-dimensional kind of musician in many ways. So it was just really fun to have him just say, "Read the song. Tell me the

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story behind it." and he'd say, "What about this? What about that?" And we truly collaborated on both. He might say, "Hey, those are too many words." I'm like, "Oh, you're right, man. Cut them out." So, it couldn't have been any more fun and more fascinating to watch these little mini stories turn into songs and then go record them and then have people like them.

WB: So, you know, you have you have a very distinct voice and almost it's very radial like so

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when you were growing up as a kid, did you have to grow into your voice?

CW: Well, here you go. Here's another bit of my music education that went into it. So, I sang in choirs. We had a really good music department in my high school. And when I was a freshman, I was a first tenor. Okay, that's the highest. I was a sophomore and I was a second tenor. Junior, I was a baritone and senior I was a bass. So I guess I did grow into my voice...and it really taught me all the way from the treble cleft, if you're

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a musician, all the way down in the bass clef. And you know, we would for instance sing the Messiah with an orchestra. So, I mean, we were a pretty well-developed high school singing, you know, eight part kind of harmony, guys and gals and so that was great background as well to bring in this music. But and also to be able to know all those parts, you know, singing at the very highest register for a guy and at the very lowest. Yeah, I did grow into the voice

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and yeah, you know, I would say my voice is maybe a little different for blues singers. You know, I haven't smoked 40 cigarettes a day, man. I know you're a health guy as well, Dr. Ward. And a lot of those guys, you know, sometimes I think, oh, I wish I had this really cool raspy old kind of guy voice, you know. But there were some great blues crooners, too, you know. know BB King was a great crooner. People say what a guitar player. I say what a singer. King of all the blues singers.

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Bobby Blue Bland. What a beautiful voice. You know, you get to R&B and soul, you know, Otis Redding. I just love those guys. That Memphis sound, that Stax Records sound. So, my voice is probably a little bit different in the blues. And my I think my blues music is a little different in that most of them are somewhat intricate stories. And some blues songs are stories and some blues songs are just the groove man and mine tend more toward the stories and so purposely when I sing I

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want people to be able to hear the lyrics and understand them, because I'm trying to tell a story. And that's where the name of the band came from – the Tellers, right? We tell stories. So there you go. Christopher Wyze & the Tellers.

WB: Well, I was about to ask you about where that name came from. So that completely makes sense. And I remember gosh, it's been a while now, but I have I have been to Greenville, Mississippi, and it is a city in the Delta that time forgot. Yeah. you know, so that whole Delta area, I

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mean, that is just that is just full of incredible flavor for songwriters and musicians and recording artists. And I think any musician or recording artist that's never been to the Delta, they need to make a trip and maybe get re-energized with their craft a bit and maybe learn something new.

CW: You know, I wrote a song called Back to Clarksdale and the lyrics are essentially it's kind of an autobiography. It's a song about a guy who kind of worked too hard and I did...kind of

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got, you know, made himself probably not real well. You know, I got to be about 40 and it's like, wow, I am burned out. And thankfully I got back to music and I got to Clarksdale and I wrote this song called Back to Clarksdale. It's the only place I really know, only place I want to go, only place that knows me, you know. That's the lyrics of the song and I really feel that genuinely every time I go to Clarksdale. It's like slow down, exhale, I'm going

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back to Clarksdale. That's actually the lyrics. And I think you're right, Ward. Any musician would benefit because that's where so much of our American music came from was from the blues. Rock and roll is blues. You know, it's mixed up with country and Appalachian music and all that, but man, the Delta's cooking that music right up out of the ground. And there's no place better to feel the music and real, you know, American music right out of there. I get chills when I when I see the sign that says "Clarksdale that way." I really do. And I always drive when I go there. It's about eight hours. Because I need to decompress, man. And I'm going back to Clarksdale and I am there and I'm totally focused on the music and the wonderful musicians I've met and become good friends with down there. It's a treat. And Greenville, I'm sure, is sort of the same thing. It's a different world, but you understand where the music came from when you go there.

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WB: Oh, yeah. And you know, Christopher, I love this album Live in Clarksdale. I mean, it is a true blues album. I found it to be very raw but brilliantly put together. And the song Stuck in the Mud, it has this sound like a movie needs to be made.

CW: Movie Ward? You said you were telling me about your friend who wrote movies. So, let's get him on board. Let's do this. Let's do this movie. Yeah.

WB: Well, he's passed away.

CW: You've got to know somebody else, don't

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you?

WB: Oh, I know more filmmakers than you can shake a stick at. But the song, I mean, is just an incredible song. So, what's it about?

CW: Well, you know, if you ever felt like you were stuck, you know, it's like, I can't go forward. I can't go back. I don't know what to do. I'm like, I don't know where I got the idea, but that, you know, I said, all I need is an idea for a song and I can pretty much write lyrics around it. So, that was it. I mean, it's a simple idea. It's

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like we've all been stuck, you know, and that's all this is. It's no more (than that). My wife, she said, "Okay, well, you didn't tell me how you got stuck in the lyrics." I'm like, "Man, it doesn't matter. Everybody's been there." So, this is one of those, "Hey, we've all been there." And that's really the story of stuck in the mud. Stuck in the mud...you know, after the flood, I'm stuck in the mud. So, and what I meant by that is

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the lyric is, you know, after some cataclysmic event. Let's call it a flood. People tend to get stuck and that's really all it is, man. This isn't the solution. Sometimes the blues just describes the problem, you know? So, that's one of these.

WB: Okay. I love that. We need more songs that may just talk about the problem and it gives us no solution. And because I know everybody in this world looks for an answer but sometimes there's not one. So we need songs in that in that realm

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and you bring that to us. But there's a song that I just love on this album called Looking for My Baby. It has such a great rhythm, but the guitar really stands out. It really does.

CW: That's my dear friend John Boyle who played in my cover band. So, you know, Christopher Wyze & the Tellers went into the studio and it was a group of guys. The live album group was essentially a different band. So, it wasn't the same guys. And my good friend John Boyle on the guitar, he just slays it. Mark Yacavone on the keyboards is masterful on that song. And Ralph Carter gave it a little bit of this doo-wop bluesy thing going on in the whole feel of the song. And this song, Looking for My Baby, is about this guy we all know, Ward. He's full of himself and he's full of it. And he says, "I'm looking for my baby. Hey fellas." He walks into, you know, the nightclub, the bar, whatever. "I'm looking for my baby." Well, the guy's full of it. He doesn't even have a girlfriend. Of course, he's just saying

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that. So, that's kind of the song. That one's kind of a funny one, but we all know somebody like that. So, I try to write songs about losers and lovable losers. So, this is kind of a lover lovable loser kind of story.

WB: I love it. But I think the song is just fantastic. But I was really surprised where you actually reached back in time and recorded a song from 1928, How Long Blues by Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell. What is it about the blues songs of the past that maybe we

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are missing in blues today?

WB: Well, I think it's the simplicity of the music both from the words and the music that they create. So here you've got Scrapper Blackwell who plays guitar and Leroy Carr who was a pianist played the piano and you know that's about all it is. And it's down stripped down to his simplest form and the words to the song are haunting. That song has been recorded hundreds of times by all the blues greats. "How long how long has that evening train been gone" You know it's

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just simple ideas like that. It builds a yearning. So I think the songs of the past, those old blues songs remind us we can do so many things in the studio and with our computers and AI and all that. And it reminds me that you don't need any of that. You don't need any of that to tell a great story. And that's what Carr and Blackwell did with that beautiful song. And then we did another one called Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out, which is another song from the 20s that we also did in

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that show. I wanted to do a couple of covers especially from Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell because they're from Indianapolis and that's where I live. And one of the most amazing things about How Long, How Long Blues Carr and Blackwell recorded eight or nine different versions of it. Their first version sold a million copies. It was one of the first million selling records in America. And it was so popular. They're like, "Well, we'll do another version and

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another one and another." They kept releasing the same song with a little bit different twist on it, which I just love. The other thing is they recorded that song here in Indianapolis in a hotel room on portable equipment in about 1925 with Vocalion Records. And you know, many of the black artists from the south they could not record in the south. People wouldn't do it. And these guys came up north and they recorded. They went to Chicago. They came to Indianapolis. And then

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there's a place just east of Indianapolis in Richmond, Indiana, Gennett Records, which Louie Armstrong recorded his first album in Richmond, Indiana for Gennett Records. Same kind of thing. A lot of these great black musicians came to Richmond, Indiana to record because they couldn't get it done elsewhere. Bix Beiderbeck, Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Waller, they all recorded here in Richmond, Indiana, just about an hour from my home here. So, that's a long story. I had to do Scrapper and Leroy

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and they both lived here. They're both buried here. And it's cool. I really dig their music and it's just as good today as it was a hundred years ago.

WB: So, who were some of your great blues influences?

CW: Well, if I had to pick one, you know, he'd be at the head of Mount Rushmore there. It'd be the great Howlin' Wolf, Chester Burnett. And he was just an incredible performer, singer. I wish I had his voice. He had a voice like a wolf. It was growly and scary and all

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that stuff...and an incredible performer, part of the Chess Records out of Chicago that sang a whole bunch of Willie Dixon songs. So, you know, I really love Howlin' Wolf. JJ Cale is another favorite of mine. Kind of a rock and roller, kind of a blues guy, kind of tied in with Leon Russell who discovered him, and he's certainly a great one. Jimmy Reed, the great Jimmy Reed. "I'm going to New York. I'm goin' if I have to walk. You know, kind of

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along the lines of those old blues songs. He had a certain beat. It was kind of the Jimmy Reed beat. And he must have recorded 500 sides and all of them kind of sound the same. And yet, I've listened to all of them. And I listen to him over and over because he had his own unique way. I love Junior Wells. Junior Wells was a Chicago guy who played with Muddy Waters and was a great performer and singer and a great harmonica player. I just absolutely love his harmonica

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playing. Then, of course, Sonny Boy Williamson, the great harmonica player, and Little Walter. So, I love the old blues. You know, that really gets to me. And it's really special music for the whole world, as I've discovered.

WB: Well, that's the thing I noticed when I was listening to the album because what I love about Live in Clarksdale is I get to hear you sing because I think a lot of fans today of music when we think of blues, most people never focus on the people

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singing. They're focusing on the guitar playing because you're right. Yeah. Because you think of, you know, I mean, we've got some great ones out there now. We got Marcus King, we got Kingfish, you know, I mean, the list goes on. But everybody's always focusing on blues guitars because, you know, like you said, if you mention BB King, the first thing people are going to think of is The Thrill is gone. They're going to think of Lucille. But like you said, they don't focus on

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how great BB King was as a singer. And we think of Freddie King and you like you said Howlin' Wolf. We're thinking of all of these other people ripping guitar. Stevie Ray Vaughn brought blues up into

mainstream radio. And I think that's probably where it kind of kicked off from between him and Eric Clapton. But I'm kind of like you. I want to hear the singing because it's the singing that's telling the stories.

CW: It is. And you know, I struggle with that a little because, you know, you

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look at me and you go, "Well, you maybe look a little like a blues guy, but you don't really talk like a blues guy." And I don't even know if I sing like a blues guy, but I really want people to hear these stories. I mean, some of them are, you know, from my real life, tragic stories. I mean, I've got one called Good Friend Gone. I've got a friend who's not with me anymore and he's gone. He made a lot of bad decisions and you know that that's the blues. Back to

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Clarksdale, you got a guy who was a business guy and he worked too hard and you know his world was going in the wrong direction until he got back into the music. And that was me. So these stories to me are timeless. They're Shakespearean, if you will. And I always liked and enjoyed reading Shakespeare and you know there's just some classic stories, good and evil and person down on his luck and things like that. Those are the stories of the blues. Those are

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the stories that, you know, last over time, I think I'm okay singing now the way I do and articulating and trying to make sure people can hear where these stories are going. But I also love people who growl the blues and I can't understand a word of it. You got the great guitar(ists), you know, Freddie King was one heck of a singer. You're a you're quite a blues man, Ward. You know your blues guys.

WB: Well, but I have to give credit to my give credit to my son for that because

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he's big blues. I mean, we would go into these old stores. They weren't record stores, but they would have these boxes of records and you just thumb through them and they're all blues. I mean, Wes Montgomery. I mean, come on. You know, so and you know, was it um Blind Lemon? I mean, the list goes on and you're just picking out these albums. And of course, he was looking at it from a guitar point of view, but to me, like when I hear you sing,

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that that's the blues that tells the story. And I mean, think about when, you know, Elvis would, in Memphis, he would go and hang out with all of the black artists. Oh, absolutely. You know, pulling songs and then creating the same songs like he did with Hound Dog and making it his own, you know. I can just literally picture Clarksdale, Mississippi in the Delta and having people go down and just absorb the blues. But when you

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sing and you sing these songs, you're bringing that true sound of the blues, the true flavor. But like you said, and this is why I really love the band's name, The Tellers, because when you sing, you hear the story. And that's what the blues is all about. And look, don't get me wrong, I love a good blues guitar solo, like the best of them, but you've got to tell the story.

CW: Well, you're just warming my heart over here. Thank you so much for that. That \ means the world. And

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yeah, it's a little different, you know, but I mentioned like Bobby Blue Bland. I listen to his music and he's a very articulate singer of the blues. I mean, you know what Bobby's talking about. He's done several recordings...one of them with BB King...the great blues song going down slow. About a man who he hadn't lived life the right way and he's going down slow and he says, "Mother don't send no doctor because the doctor can't do me no good." And

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Bobby Bland does a version of that (song) and if I've listened to that once I've listened to it 500 times. I cannot get enough of that story about a man who's at the end of his life and said I didn't do it right. And when you see that train come into town, mama, you go get my clothes cuz they're going to put me in a box and I want to look good. And I mean, you just hear that story and it all happens in three or four minutes of this man laying out his life story that, you know, quite frankly, could have

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turned out a little bit better, but it didn't.

WB: But you know the thing about singing the blues that a lot of other genres don't ever touch is with the blues you're selling the song. It's the singer selling the story, selling the song because the audience is feeling the emotion. They may not completely understand the story but they're like, "okay I get the sorrow. I get the pain." You know, maybe someone that got forgotten and or

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down on their luck or maybe found the love, but you couldn't reel them in.

CW: Boy, it does. You know, I wrote a song with Gerry Murphy, in the band, called Hard Work Don't Pay. Which, you know, how many times does that idea, you know," take this job and shove it and all tha." But at certain point in your life, everybody says, "Hey, is this worth it? Is all this hard work?"

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And so, I think there are these timeless stories. I kind of invent these people, you know. I invented this guy who's like, you know, hey, I've had it up to here. I've been working in this coal mine and I'm done with it. I sat down and wrote this song and I quit. You know that I'm done with this thing. So, I

did another song called Life Behind Bars. You know, we all think about maybe the rock and roll or blues singer who maybe never got there, you know, was going to be somebody and it

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didn't work. So, this fella, I made up. He lives his life behind bars. He's trapped behind the 12 bars of the blues. He thought he was going to do amazing music, and he just plays the same three chords every night for money in the tip jar. And you know, sometimes he has a few too many and he passes out and he sleeps behind the bar in the alley. So his life is behind bars there. So, you know, I'm trying to tell these stories about things. You know, we all maybe, we haven't gone that far,

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but we've had little glimpses of this in our life. And I don't know, there's something about it. I think you get it. I get it. People who listen to blues get it when you hear these stories. I don't know what it is. You feel better because it's your guy. It's that guy, you know? And so I don't know what you know, that's the blues. It's like the original talk therapy. Somebody asked me that the other day. I said, "Man, the blues is talk therapy, man.

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You got to talk about your troubles. You got to talk about your problems. You got to tell people you know, all the hard stuff that's gone down. And once you get that out, okay, now maybe I'll get up tomorrow morning. I can do this again." Yeah, that's exactly what it is.

WB: I went in and not only did I listen to the whole album, I went onto your website to watch some of the music videos and I'm thinking the whole time like,

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you guys need to be booked on the on the Tonight Show. You need to be booked on Saturday Night Live, because you what's lacking today is the emotional feel of the music. But at the same time, you have something, all of you have something, that I don't see a lot of today in music. And that's you, even though the songs may be, you know, down and out here and there, there's still this internal fun factor that the audience receives. And you have to have the fun factor. Like you want the

36:00

audience to sit there and go, "Oh man, I like these guys." You know, and because hey, likability sells, you know.

CW: I'm so delighted to hear you say that that somehow comes through, you know, in the videos. Because over the years people would tell me, you know, after a show or something, "hey, you look like you're having a lot of fun up there." I'm like, "I am. I'm having a ball." That's the funny thing you know being in business and so forth I wasn't

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always having fun. You know it was a little heavy load. I made it out the other side and now I do music for fun. I once mentioned to Ralph Carter my friend and producer and mentor and co-writer I said, "Ralph doggone it, I wish I would have gotten into music when I was young like you did." He was 20 years old playing in stadiums you know in front 20,000 people and he said, "Chris, I don't think so. I think it worked out just fine for you." So, it might not have been as much fun as you're thinking it would have been.

37:08

WB: Are or is the band on tour at the moment?

CW: Well, we're starting to play a little bit. So, you mentioned Live in Clarksdale. That's the first show we ever did. So that was number one. We all met as a band the day before. So, that band was constituted and I gotta give credit to Ralph Carter. I said, "Ralph, I want to do a live album. We're gonna do it in Clarksdale. We're going to use Coop Cooper. He's a filmmaker down in Clarksdale. He's actually done Christone's

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videos and things." So, Kingfish, Christone Kingfish Ingram...in fact, his videos, some of them are shot in the same venue that we shot live in Clarksdale and recorded. That's the Juke Joint Chapel right there in Clarksdale. So I said, "Ralph, we're gonna we're going to go down to Clarksdale and shoot this thing live and I'll bring some guys from Indianapolis." Then we had a drummer from Memphis. We had a keyboard player from Oxford, Mississippi." And we all

38:08

met on Monday and ran through the music and we did the show on Tuesday. So, it was another experience of, hey, let's put the band together. And to have a great guy like Ralph who, hey, I'm like, how do you rehearse this? He goes, "don't you worry about it."

WB: And how do you rehearse the blues, by the way?

CW: Well, yeah, but here's five guys that never played together before, and we've got a show to do, and we're going to record it, and we're going to film it. And man, this is this is live TV.

38:41

We're kind of rolling the dice here. And it was a short show. We did 10 songs. I keep learning, Ward. I keep learning. I'm an old guy, but I keep learning. It's like, oh, I should have done 20 songs and taken...maybe pick 10. But we said we're going to do 10. And it's like, "fellas, every one of these has to be a keeper." And you know what? Somehow we may have pulled it off. It was a short show. We did it during the day. Hey, there's cameras

39:10

everywhere. It was a little messy. And we had people there. It was just a riot to do it and a lot of energy because, you've got one chance, man. And somehow we pulled it off. But it was one heck of a lot of fun.

WB: Well, I will say this with absolute honesty and sincerity, but the whole world needs to see Christopher Wyze & the Tellers.

CW: That is so good. That, you know, that's kind of my goal. And so you said, "Are we on tour?" So there was our one

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show. Well, that was one show. We did have a show in Indianapolis about six weeks ago, and we're actually doing one a week from tomorrow at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. It's a big art fair about 20,000 people. We'll be on the big stage there. And so, you know, I'd like to put a band together and on the road. And when I started on this project, um, people said, "You can't do it this way. You can't go make a record and then have people listen to it and pick up fans

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and followers. Doesn't work that way. You got to be you got to be out playing. You to get in the van. That's how you do it." And I was like, "Well, I get that, but I'm running out of time, man. I gotta get this going now." And I just mean that, because I'm so excited and so energized to get it done. It's like I don't have five years to travel around the country. It's like let's get the album done. Let's get it out there.

40:45

Let's go to the next thing. Let's make another album. And just two three weeks ago, Ralph and I, we've put the plans in place for album number three. So you were probably going to say, "What's next?" Well, that's what's next.

WB: I think somebody needs to book all of you for Memphis in May next year.

CW: Oh, just call whoever it is and tell them.

WB: You know, there I've been to Memphis in May and it it's a great experience.

CW: There's a shiny quarter in it for you,

41:18

Ward, if you get that done. Yeah.

WB: We were lucky enough when we went to Memphis in May, we saw Aretha Franklin. Oh, and Jerry Lee Lewis. Oh my. Keb Mo. Oh my. And um I know Sheryl Crowe is there. But we were in the blues tent with Keb Mo and one hellacious thunderstorm ripped through that concert and we're sitting there going, "We're inside. We're in the tent and we don't care."

CW: There you go. Oh, that had to be wonderful. That sounds fantastic.

WB: Oh yeah. I mean, everybody needs to go

42:02

at least once because it's right there on the river. It's right off of Beal Street. So, you know, what can you do? I mean, it's just music to enjoy. But you guys need to be booked for Memphis and May. And I will stand firm and say that they need to book you on the Tonight Show as well as Saturday Night Live because you guys are the total package when it comes to a band. And you know, part of that thing that you told me about Ralph told me...well, it probably worked out okay for you.

CW: I think if I would have

42:33

gotten into this when I was young, I would have treated it the same way as I did sort of being a business guy. I would have have clenched up. I would have, you know, tried too hard. I wouldn't have enjoyed it. I would have made myself sick. You know, you know what I mean? And now I don't have any of that. People have asked me, are you, you know, are you nervous when you perform? No. Nervous is when you run a business and you've got you got payroll in two weeks, you got 30 mouths

43:0

to feed and there isn't the money. And so there wasn't a paycheck for me for a while, you know, and that nervous. But playing the music, playing blues, you got to be kidding me. There's not a thing about it that's nerve-wracking, not at all. It's pure fun. It's pure joy.

WB: And so I love that, Chris. And ladies and gentlemen, you got to head over to Christopher WyzeandtheTellers.com. That's the domain. ChristopherWyzeandtheTellers.com for their brand

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new album Live in Clarksdale, as well as check out their music videos and more. And hopefully they'll put a whole big tour together because not only does America need to see him, the whole world needs to see him. And Christopher, I want to thank you so much for being on the show and I'm going to have to contact Scott and say, man, thank you for hooking me up.

CW: Well, I want to reach through the screen and give you a big hug, Ward, because this is about the most fun I've had in a long time. And you can tell I don't have

44:09

very much fun.

WB: Well, you have a lot of fun as long as you stand behind the microphone, right?

CW: Oh, that's exactly right. I can tell you've got a knack for this, too, my friend.

WB: Well, I've had a little practice over the over the years with this. But, again, ladies and gentlemen, if you want to hear real raw, fun blues music that you can feel, you can move to, it's Christopher Wyze and the Tellers. And again, Christopher Wyze and the Tellers.com. Check out their new album and take it

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from me. I've done more reviews on music and film and the list goes on. That way, if I like it, you're going to like it. And in this case, you're going to love it. So, again, Christopher Wyze and the Tellers.com. And again, Chris, thank you so much for being on the show. You have an open invitation to come back anytime.

CW: Oh, cheers. Thanks so much, Ward. Pleasure to meet you.

WB: You, too. And ladies and gentlemen, hey, we'll be back with more.