

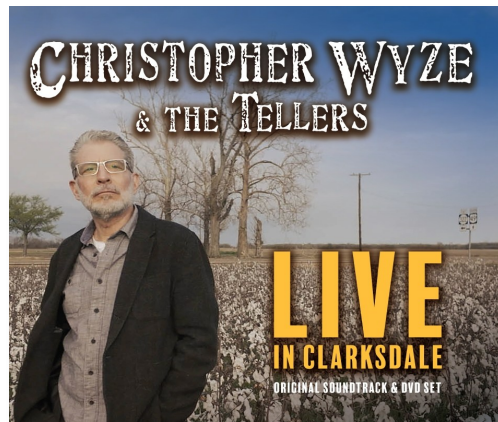
new releases

CHRISTOPHER WYZE & THE TELLERS *Live in Clarksdale*

Big Radio Records – BGR 1002

Christopher Wyze had been a longtime frontman in blues cover bands when he met and befriended producer and multi-instrumentalist Ralph Carter. Carter encouraged Wyze to begin writing his own lyrics and told him, “We’re recording an album of your songs someday.” In 2024, Christopher Wyze & the Tellers released their debut, *Stuck in the Mud*. The collection of all-original material earned critical acclaim. *Live in Clarksdale*, the band’s sophomore effort, was recorded at the Juke Joint Chapel at the Shack Up Inn. Those who purchase the album on CD get an accompanying DVD featuring Wyze giving listeners a tour of Clarksdale and Tutwiler, Mississippi.

The upbeat and autobiographical *Three Hours from Memphis* is a good introduction to the band’s chemistry. Restrained, tasteful guitar work from John Boyle and sweet keyboard licks from Mark Yacovone perfectly back up Wyze’s vocals. *Money Spent Blues* is a tune bound to resonate with inflation-weary listeners. Yacovone gets room to stretch out on keyboard as Wyze sings, “I buy everything you wanna sell me, from my head down to my shoes.” *Hard Work Don’t Pay* is another track that’s well-suited to challenging economic times. Boyle’s slide guitar work and Wyze’s harmonica chops add grit, and he puts some fire in his voice as he sings, “I’m not working in that hell hole—I done made my getaway.”



Wyze comes into his own as a songwriter on *Cotton Ain’t King*, an interesting exploration of the blues’ roots in the sharecropping experience. As he sings, “The work it had a lyric, rocking’ gentle, movin’ slow,” atmospheric slide guitar work from Boyle and soulful organ riffs from Yacovone flesh out the arrangement. On *How Long, How Long Blues*, Wyze & the Tellers do justice to a familiar warhorse. Wyze gives one of his best vocal performances, and Boyle and Yacovone play off one another beautifully. *Nobody Knows You When You’re Down and Out*, performed as a stately acoustic duet between Wyze and Yacovone, is a great way to close the album.

Live in Clarksdale proves Wyze to be a capable frontman and bandleader. Graduating from cover bands and performing his own material was a good move—it will be interesting to see where he goes next.

—Jon Kleinman