



Historical meaning of NAPTOWN BLUES

The new blues album from Christopher Wyze & the Tellers

Naptown Blues is a hometown album: current-day Indianapolis blues musicians returning to the music of two often-forgotten bluesmen from their home town whose work helped shape American blues. Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell were not Delta or Chicago bluesmen by origin or identity; they were Indianapolis artists – *Naptown* artists. They lived most of their lives in Indianapolis. Their musical partnership began in the city. They made their first recordings in Indianapolis. They both met untimely deaths and are buried in Indianapolis. And their songs carried the city's sounds across the country, around the world and into blues history.

- The album honors **Leroy Carr** and **Scrapper Blackwell**, two major prewar blues artists. Leroy Carr moved from Tennessee to Indianapolis in childhood. He lived here until his death in 1935. Francis Hillman “Scrapper” Blackwell moved to the city as a small child and also made the city his lifelong home, until his passing in 1962.
- Their celebrated partnership began in 1928 through an introduction by local record-shop proprietor (and Vocalion Records dealer) **J.E. Guernsey**, who introduced the two musicians and helped arrange their first recordings.
- At Guernsey's urging, Vocalion Records sent portable recording equipment to Indianapolis to capture the sound of the Naptown duo. Leroy and Scrapper's first recordings were made at the downtown offices of **WFBM radio in the Indianapolis Athletic Club Building** in June 1928. The building still stands today and listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**
- Those sessions produced *How Long – How Long Blues*, *My Own Lonesome Blues*, *Kokomo Blues*, and *Penal Farm Blues*.

- ***How Long – How Long Blues*** became Carr and Blackwell’s breakthrough record and one of the defining blues songs of the late 1920s. It was said to have been a million seller, and spawned multiple Carr-Blackwell renditions. It was later recorded or by artists including Tampa Red, Count Basie, Big Joe Turner, Ray Charles, Lou Rawls, B.B. King and more than 120 others.
- ***Kokomo Blues***, recorded by Blackwell as a guitar-and-vocal solo, became part of a larger blues lineage. In 1936, Robert Johnson recorded this song’s musical ideas into ***Sweet Home Chicago***, one of the most covered songs in blues history.
- ***Naptown Blues*** also restores attention to Indianapolis itself as a blues city: Indiana Avenue, the Walker Theater, the WFBM/Vocalion field sessions, local Black entertainment culture, and the “Naptown” identity all run through the story of this new album.
- Christopher Wyze & the Tellers recorded *Naptown Blues* in downtown Indianapolis at **Postal Recording**, located about 2.5 miles from Carr and Blackwell’s 1928 Vocalion recording site. This staging adds to the historical echoes of the project, making it a literal and musical return to Carr and Blackwell’s home town.
- The record includes **10 Carr/Blackwell songs** plus ***Birthday in Jail***, a song reimagined by Christopher Wyze as a year-round tip of the hat to Carr and Blackwell’s 1929 recording ***Christmas in Jail – Ain’t That a Pain***.
- Historically, *Naptown Blues* is not just a tribute album. It is more: a way of placing Carr and Blackwell back where they belong — not only in blues history, but in Indianapolis history.

Christopher Wyze & the Tellers

NAPTOWN BLUES

1. I’m Going Back to Tennessee – 4:03
2. Naptown Blues – 2:54
3. How Long - How Long Blues – 4:21
4. The Truth About the Thing – 3:12
5. My Own Lonesome Blues – 2:51
6. Midnight Hour Blues – 3:28
7. Kokomo Blues – 3:52
8. Tired Of Your Low Down Ways – 3:06
9. You Got to Reap What You Sow – 3:09
10. Prison Bound Blues – 4:39
11. Birthday in Jail – 4:06

RECORDED IN INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA – USA