



CBG REVIEW

October 2021

JACOB GREEN NO END IN SIGHT

Interview Jacob Green / USA / p.3

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Joe Oltean / Clutch Creations / Australia / p.12

STILL SHOWING US WHY...

Mac Arnold / USA / p.19

WHAT HAPPENED TO ELMO LEE?

*Interview John Stax / Black Diamond CBGs /
Australia / p.25*

GLAD TO BE BACK!

The 9th BSA Cigar Box Guitar Festival / France / p.33

CONTRIBUTORS / P.41

Editorial

Heavily into the blues...

Welcome to the October 2021 edition of CBG Review! This issue begins with a taste of US musician Jacob Green's contemporary *OneManBand*. While Jason likes to play "anything with strings," he now has a special affinity for cigar box guitars and the stripped-down roots sound from playing them distorted or acoustic. Over time you could say Jacob's CBGs have become a trademark for his one-man band. His latest album "No End in Sight" was recorded during the Covid pandemic and released this year.

Australian Joe Oltean of *Clutch Creations* has been building cigar box guitars for about nine years now, but will turn anything into a guitar. Among his CBG-related creations are his three-string "Tiki Dude" intricately carved out of a log with a dremel, his three-string laser-cut "Viking" guitar and his "V Guitar" made to look like the emblem on an old Ford V8. Joe clearly goes out of his way to put "details in places that don't normally get any details."

Any CBG magazine worth its salt needs an article about US musician Mac Arnold and everything he's contributed to the world of blues over the years, all starting with a home-made gas-can guitar. The focal point of the article is Mac's honorary doctorate in music and why these degrees are not handed out for just any reason. A vote of thanks to Dr. Mac Arnold and friends for giving us a taste and appreciation of blues old and new...

In the same vein, John Stax of *Black Diamond Cigar Box Guitars* in Australia tells us about some of the twists and turns in his life since he played bass in *The Pretty Things* in London, England, in the sixties when blues was at the height of mainstream popularity. In 1967, John left the UK and moved Down Under to start a new life. Today, he builds CBGs and other musical instruments, and still has a passion for the blues.

Grégoire Corby has organized the Boissys-sans-Avoir CBG festival in France every year since 2014 with the exception of last year due to the pandemic. Even this year's festival was uncertain up until the last moment and was the first BSA festival to host only French performers due to Covid travel restrictions. Like other festivals privileged to take place this year, there's no doubt the wait was worth it!

As always – read, enjoy, and be inspired!

Best regards

Huey Ross

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JACOB & GREEN

and their friends



Artwork: Csaba Mester

No end in Sight

Interview Jacob Green, West Charleston, Vermont, USA

I'll be honest, I was hesitant to play CBGs at first, because I've been playing slide on different six-string guitars since 2009 and for whatever reason I felt a CBG wouldn't sound full enough. Boy was I wrong! I got my first one built by John Guldemon from my hometown of Beloit, Wisconsin, in early 2018 on one of my "mini-tours" and have been addicted to playing them ever since...

CBGR: Jacob, how long have you been touring now?

Jacob Green: Well, technically I've been off tour since my daughter was born in late 2017. But, prior to the pandemic (2018–2020) I still would do "mini-tours" for as long as a week to three weeks on occasion, and now that I officially live in Vermont, I still play all over the New England area (New Hampshire, upstate New York, Massachusetts, Maine) when I can. But I did tour off and on from 2007 to 2017 and, when I started "*OneManBand*" in late 2012, the tours got heavier and I was literally living on the road for quite a few of those years. I've been to 47 states total and played in 40 of them; unfortunately, I haven't been out of this country yet.

And you've lived in a lot of different places...

Yes, I used to say I had five musical home bases; Wisconsin (where I grew up), Colorado (first place to tour to), northern California (home base for two years), Vermont (where my wife is from) and the

Southern Appalachia area (Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee).

My mom's side of the family still lives in Georgia.

"I played 34 states in 2013 alone, but it would have been closer to 40 if not for that RV"

And chalked up a ton of memories – what are a couple of your favorites?

Well, I always mention the summer of 2013 and the four months I owned an RV that constantly needed repair. Over a 16-day show tour in Southern Appalachia, the RV broke down 14 out of 16 of those days, and equally as many dates, if not more, were cancelled in the same area. I played 34 states in 2013 alone, but it would have been closer to 40 if not for that RV. Although, we did take all the back roads from southern Wisconsin to Gilpin, Colorado, with that same RV, knowing we should probably take it easy on such a long haul. But it was all worth it because, when we got to Colorado, I played an incredible festival (Gratitude Fest) at my friend's place in the middle of



Photo: Allegra Bluegrass

the mountains with my band River Water Tribe and as *OneManBand*. You literally couldn't ask for a more scenic view or better place to play.

What makes it all worthwhile?

Since I've somewhat settled down from both becoming a father and again during the pandemic, I've had time to reflect a lot and I can honestly say the long back catalog of songs that were written while traveling makes it all worthwhile. Plus, I'm huge into nature, so I've been in national forests and state parks all over this country, truly seeing the most beautiful places.

So not too many rocky times?

It comes with the territory. I never thought of myself as hitting the road and becoming famous, but literally traveling for the purpose of getting inspired. And

inspiration can come with all sorts of ups and downs. Besides many vehicles being broken down, I've fortunately come out of it with an overall positive outlook, and it's in my nature to learn things the hard way. So, literally through experience, I now can do most of my own auto repairs, as well as know the touring and business side of music in a whole other way. Plus, I wouldn't have written the songs I wrote if I hadn't gone through both good and bad experiences.

“The long back catalog of songs that were written while traveling makes it all worthwhile”

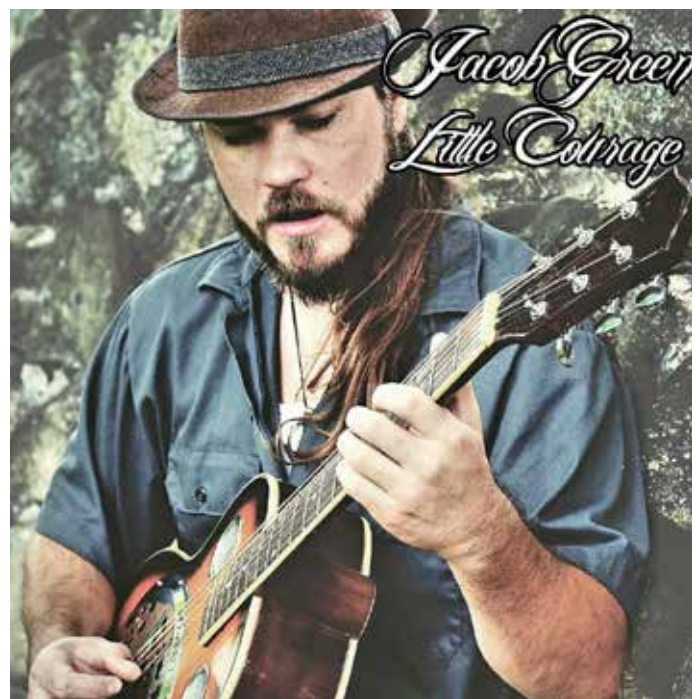
You have a big international fan base – do you have any offers or plans to go overseas?

I've definitely been getting more radio airplay internationally in general and have gotten some offers in both Germany and Switzerland to tour, plus a random newspaper write-up in Italy. Although, with everything going on with the pandemic, things are on hold for the moment.

You're a one-man band, but you collaborate with a number of different musicians and bands...

Yes, I predominantly perform as *OneManBand*, but also perform with a full five- to six-piece band or can even do a duo or trio show sometimes. From 2007 to 2012, I was actually doing just the opposite, predominantly performing with full bands and would only perform solo every now and then. The bands include: *The Grit* (2008–2017), *River Water Tribe* (2010–2017), *Jacob Green & Friends* (2014–2016), *Jacob Green Band* (2018 until now).

“After watching my full show schedule get cancelled, I immediately started recording both old and new material”



And your latest album “No End in Sight” was recorded during the pandemic...

Yes, after watching my full show schedule get cancelled, I immediately started recording both old and new material. Over 20 songs were recorded for the album, but in the end only 12 made the final album list, plus “Stomp” being added as a bonus track. The album features musicians I’ve collaborated with from Wisconsin, Colorado, and Massachusetts, and newer players from here in Vermont.

You also came out with the one-man band version of “Little Courage” and “Good Spirit” albums this year?

Yes, the *OneManBand* version of “Little Courage” was intended to be released at the end of 2020, but was delayed until the beginning of this year.

“Good Spirit” is actually a 2018 album I released. I just put out a “redux” version of the album this past year, mainly because I finally filmed music videos for the songs “In the mountains” and “Leave my soul behind,” and I revamped and added Vermont players to the song “Good Spirit.”

How many albums have you released altogether?

Well, I could say over a dozen since 2007, but currently only five are publicly available since 2013, mainly because all the others were not professional quality (learning the hard way again). The albums include: “Travelin’ Soul” (2013), “Harvest Time” (2015), “Good Spirit” (2018) plus the redux version, “Little Courage” (2020) plus the *OneManBand* version, and “No End in Sight” (2021).

You have a penchant for blues rock – how and when did the cigar box guitars slip into your act?

I’ll be honest, I was hesitant to play CBGs at first, because I’ve been playing slide on different six-string guitars since 2009 and for whatever reason I felt a CBG wouldn’t sound full enough. Boy was I wrong! I got my first one built by John Guldemon from my hometown of Beloit, Wisconsin, in early 2018 on one of my “mini-tours” and have been addicted to playing them ever since.

“I felt a CBG wouldn’t sound full enough. Boy was I wrong!”

What do you like most about them?

I truly love the stripped-down roots sound you get from playing them both distorted and acoustic. And with all the foot-stompin’ blues material I already have and continue to write, I feel CBGs just go perfect with that sound, especially when I slide.

Would you say they’ve become a trademark for your one-man band?

Most definitely, my *OneManBand* performance is definitely where you’ll see me playing my CBGs the most. Many songs I do with the band, I exclusively play CBG stripped-down versions as *OneManBand*. Even songs I record with a six-string slide resonator as *OneManBand*, I play an alternate live version on my CBG.

How many do you have and who built them?

I currently have four CBGs: my Arturo Fuente built in 2018 by John Guldemond from Beloit (an open F# three-string fretless); my Hemp Box Guitar built in 2018 by Mark May from Milwaukee (open A, three strings –the box is literally made out of hemp fiber), the Leather Rose built this year by Jason Greer for ADK Coast CBGs (open G, three strings) and the Magic Toast guitar (with custom Jacob Green graphics) also built this year by Jason Greer for ADK Coast CBGs (open D four-string fretless).

You also play acoustic and resonator guitars, banjo and harmonica?

Yes, I like to say I play “anything with strings,” but here’s what I play in chronological order: electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass, harmonica, banjo, lap slide guitar, mandolin, lap slide resonator guitar, ukulele, stomp box, foot tambourine, two different electric hollow body guitars and four different cigar box guitars. Typically, three to five different string instruments per live performance.

You play “Like a Lightning Bolt” with only a three-string CBG, no slide, but the sound is great...

Thanks, that song was a bit of experimentation for me, especially with the distortion. But overall I was satisfied with how it came out, especially with the simplicity of it.

Is music in the family?

Actually no, I have a great grandfather who I never met, who would occasionally play fiddle in a grass trio in Georgia about 100 years ago. But, besides that out of four siblings and a fairly large extended family,





Photo: Greer Cicarelli Creative

I'm the only one who plays music, with the exception of my younger brother who temporarily played drums in high school.

How did you get into performing?

I've really always been obsessed with music and specifically songwriters of all genres since quite a young age. Technically, I've been writing songs or some form of lyrics since about the age of 12 and got my first electric guitar by 14, and was writing and performing original "punk" songs during my freshman year of high school. We fortunately had a decent local music scene and, by the time I was 21 (2006), I was trying to get serious about playing acoustic guitar, kinda doing a roots blues and the outlaw country thing.

"I was trying to get serious about playing acoustic guitar, kinda doing a roots blues and the outlaw country thing"

I started playing more open mics in 2007 and, by 2008, I had a local band, *The Grit*, from my hometown. We were getting paid to do bar shows, consisting of about 50% cover material, and the other half was mainly my originals. By 2009, I was living in Milwaukee where

there was much more opportunity to perform both solo and with a band and, by 2012, I was ready to hit the road in a serious way.

Despite the pandemic and studio work, you've still managed to play quite a few festivals and gigs this summer?

Yes, it's nothing compared to doing what I used to play with a full-time show schedule (130 to 150 shows a year), but I've had the opportunity to perform just about weekly throughout the summer in the New England area, predominantly outdoor shows.

When was the last time you went busking?

If my memory serves me correctly, the last time I was busking I was in downtown Asheville, North Carolina, in early 2017, on tour playing an actual show there later that evening. I have played twice on Church St in Burlington, Vermont (2019 and 2020), which is known for busking too, although I was doing a performance for the BCA concert series. But I have busked many times on Pearl Street in Boulder, Colorado, on State Street in Madison, Wisconsin; on Main Street in Sebastopol, California; downtown Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee; somewhere randomly in eastern Ohio during a blues fest; and many other places I can't recall. I did get asked to stop by a cop for playing without a permit in the Florida Keys as well. ☺

You've also been focusing lately on your YouTube presence?

Yes, I feel overall it's worth working towards building a fan base to the max, especially if you can monetize your views eventually.

The one-man band videos have had a lot of views this year – are you keeping count?

Always kinda looking, but more or less keeping count of followers or subscribers.

The music world has changed dramatically – how have you adapted to the changes?

In the past couple of years, I've taken steps to learn more about online marketing and advertising as an independent musician. Plus, since 2007 as well, I've been consistently recording, editing, mixing and mastering my own music, and felt that I truly was at a professional level of recording by 2017. I've also been doing the majority of my own digital graphics and photography, plus a good portion of filming and editing my own promotional videos and music videos. Again, it's been on a more professional level over the last few years, so now I'm extending everything I do for my own music to other artists of a similar nature who want to collaborate – at an affordable rate.

“I've been consistently recording, editing, mixing and mastering my own music”

You have your own independent label, Growth Productions, and are now in the process of expanding?

Yes, I've always represented my own music, including band projects, under the name *Growth Productions* and now I'm slowly expanding the “label” to collaborate with more artists.

So are you busy making plans or is the future wide open?

My main plan is to continue to put a lot of original content, including more music videos and original albums. Basically, I'm currently working on about four different albums with both a full band and as *OneManBand*, or a mix of both. I plan on releasing a double blues album, with one disc full band, and one disc as *OneManBand* in early 2022. I also recently recorded acoustic slide blues sessions with blues harmonica player Ed "WhiteWolf" Schoenly, and there very well could be an EP coming out of those sessions...stay tuned. ☺ ■

<https://www.jacobgreenmusic.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/jacobgreenmusic>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-QfRpXpH9zNpbqSdPS4W1w>

Builders mentioned:

John Guldemon:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/482635468417721/user/1603753770>

Mark May:

<https://www.facebook.com/mark.may.7583>

Jason Greer, ADK Coast CBGs:

<https://www.facebook.com/AdkCoastCBG>



Photo: Shannon Alexander

Clutch Creations



Pushing the boundaries

**Joe Oltean, Clutch Creations,
Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia**

**G'day from Queensland, Australia!
My name is Joe and I'm from Clutch Creations. I've been building cigar box guitars for about nine years now, but my style isn't just CBGs, I'll turn anything into a guitar! I like to build things that don't exist until I create them, hence the name Clutch Creations.**

For example, *The Tiki Dude*. Have you seen the photo of a cartoon guy holding up a box that says, "DIY guitar" and a log falls out? That single meme was my motivation to build the most detailed log guitar I could think of. I enjoy all aspects of woodworking, especially Dremel rotary carving (like a dentist drill with changeable bits). A Tiki mask is a great first project for anyone wanting to get into carving because the stenciling is simple and the curve of the log creates the shape of the face.

But being me, I had to push it further than that and carve a full front and back Tiki head! At the end of the build, what I now had was two 40 liter buckets of sawdust and a truly one-of-a-kind guitar. *The Tiki Dude* isn't a cigar box guitar, but I'd like to think it still follows the principles of the culture, e.g. it's a three-string tuned in G, 25-inch neck with a delta pickup, it even opens up like a box! But it's a log.



The Tiki Dude

I haven't always built super detailed guitars, my first few were made from fence palings using a jigsaw and a drill. I called my first one *The Fence Picker*. But with every build I bought more tools and perfected my skills, incorporating new techniques along the way and now my style is my own. What you can expect from a Clutch Creations guitar is first and foremost a personally unique theme suited to its new owner – it must tell a story. It doesn't matter if you're interested in growing flowers or riding a Harley, I'll make it work!

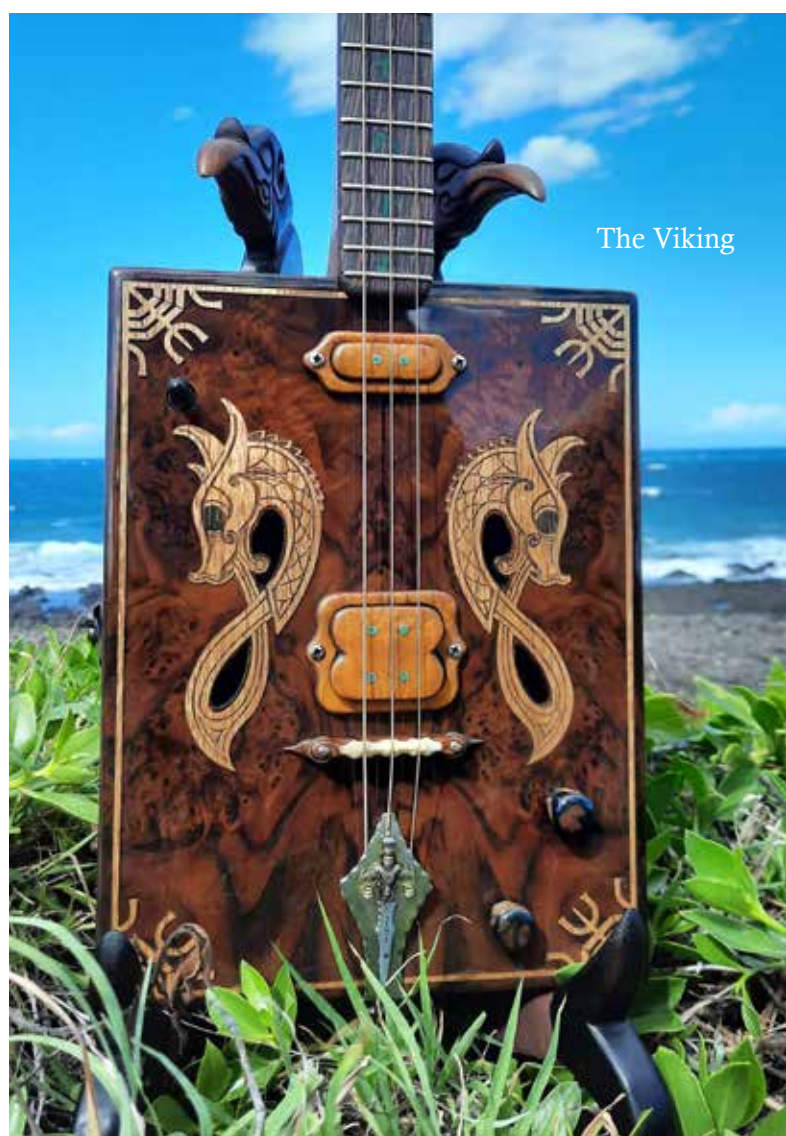
“I haven't always built super detailed guitars, my first few were made from fence palings”

Another element I take pride in is the use of quality woods – Australian natives combined with exotic species from around the world. My main two finishes are a silky satin polyurethane spray, built up in layers or a deep high-gloss shine using a two-part epoxy resin. I love using resin as a finish and as inlays. Adding colored pigments or filling in cracks; it's fun stuff to work with.

My details are usually hand carved or laser cut inlays (like *The Viking* guitar). Working with the local trophy engraving shop, I design all the artwork and they have the high-quality laser and CNC routing machines. I've learnt how their tools and programs run, what they can and can't do, making their tools work for me.



The Fence Picker



The Viking

The trophy guys enjoy my jobs as I've done all the designing for them and they just have hit enter! Plus it gives them something interesting to work on instead of engraving name plaques day in day out.

There's lots of different aspects that make my builds what they are: carved bone details, bullet fret markers, beautiful book-matched veneers, laminated necks and so on. I really enjoy making three- and four-string box guitars, building a box the same way as a cigar box is constructed, but with my own woods. This is my blank canvas. Once the theme is chosen, I think about the related details to the theme and how I can incorporate those details in a way that flows and looks natural. Maintaining originality and creative ideas throughout the build. Some builds require lots of details and with others less is more.

“It's always been in my nature to tinker or to combine objects and make something cool”

It's always been in my nature to tinker or to combine objects and make something cool. As a kid I was building elaborate Lego constructions for hours on end, this turned into building model cars, which I continued into my 30's. Just like my guitars, these plastic cars became heavily modified and detailed models for which I even won a few awards. Two hundred hours of work put into an object that fits in the palm of my hand! But my



previous model building hobby gave me an exceptional eye for detail and how things need to flow naturally. Think of an old custom hot rod. Someone had to chop and sculpt the body lines, add performance parts, build a practical-but-stylized interior and finish it off with a stunning paint job, making sure the whole build flows from bumper to bumper. This is how I approach my guitars.

The name Clutch Creations comes from my model-car days. Back then we all had car-related nicknames and the word clutch is not only a car part, but also the name of my favorite blues rock band “Clutch.” So for me cars, music and custom builds – what more could you want! Clutch Creations was born. Now I build all kinds of things using mainly wood and resin, but they all fall under the same name.



Bundy Rum

“Cars, music and custom builds – what more could you want!”

Some of the pinnacle builds of my career would be the *Bundy Rum* fence paling guitar, which was an earlier build. I took some really crappy wood and made it look stunning. This build showed me what I’m capable of building. The *Rebelfm* and *ACDC* cigar box guitars. Both these were built for a large rock radio station, these two builds gave me



Rebelfm and ACDC

great exposure and opened many doors, plus they pushed me to make more higher-quality guitars.

The V Guitar was a constructional nightmare, made to look like an old Ford v8 badge. A full internal skeleton with angles going in every direction, with an embedded 63 Ford hubcap in the middle. A stunning guitar that is like no other and actually plays pretty well!

As mentioned, *The Tiki Dude* was my first carving experience. *The Viking* was a meeting point for all the techniques I've perfected over years. It has it all – veneered body with a resin finish, hand carved details in places that don't normally get any details. Laser cut inlays, exotic woods and so on. There are other builds I could mention, but these are the standouts for me.

“I will continue to learn and build as long as my eyesight and hands permit!”

My musical and guitarist influences over the years would have to begin with *Metallica*, from their earlier years. I loved the raw power riffs that James would play, which is probably why I play a lot of heavier riffs myself. But as I got older, I gravitated more towards rock blues and artists like *Clutch*, *The White Stripes*, *Ash Grunwald*, etc. Then I found *Seasick Steve*, which opened up



the world of homemade cigar box guitars and the rest is history! I will continue to learn and build as long as my eyesight and hands permit!

<https://www.facebook.com/guitarsbyclutchcreations>

Viking themed 3 string box guitar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRd8aR9b9Ak>

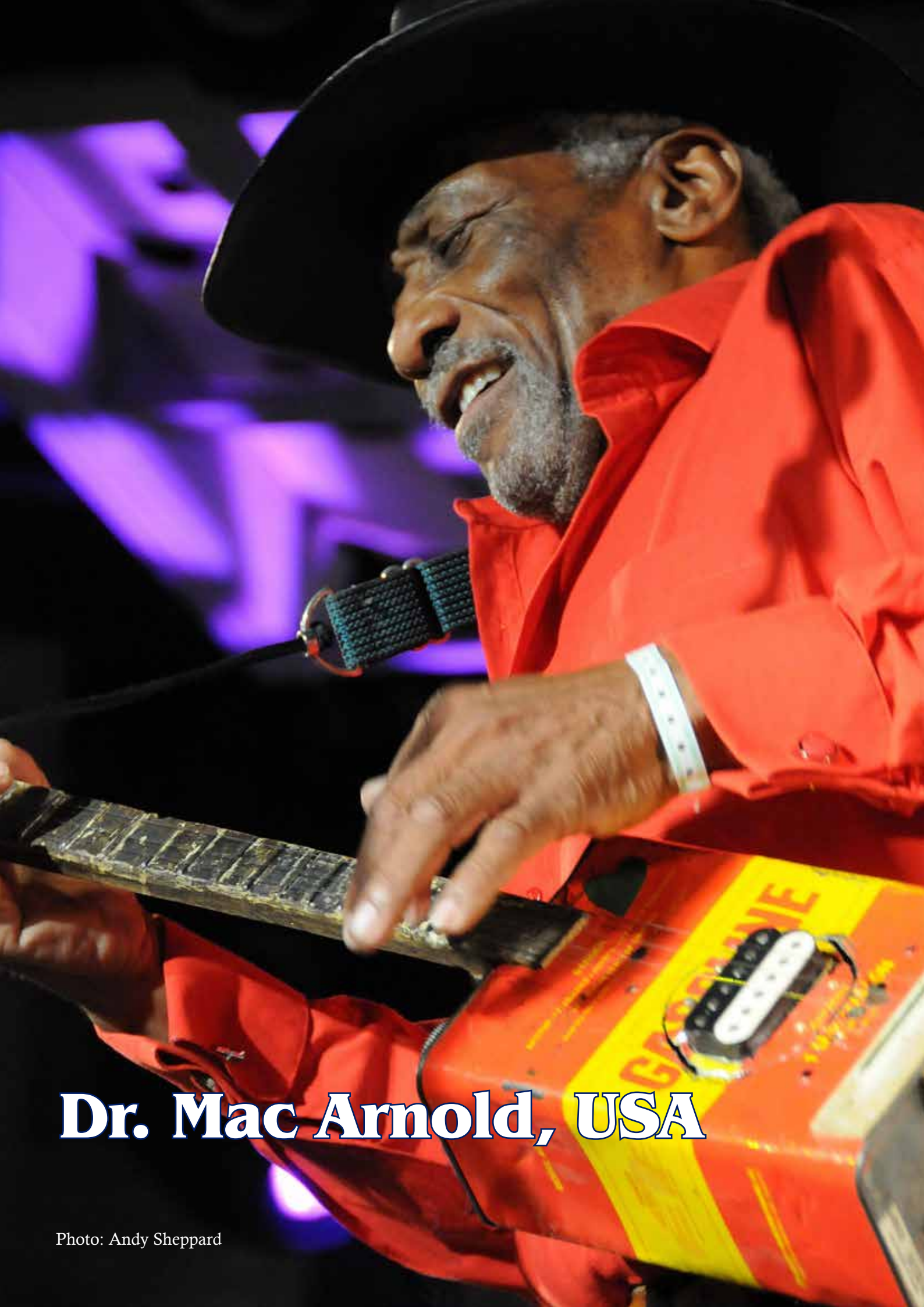
3-string guitar carved from a mango log:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPm2P04mxR4>

It's been my pleasure contributing to CBG Review and I hope this article inspires other builders to push their own boundaries and to develop their own new techniques. I know I'm still pushing mine! This is a community hobby and I'm always here to offer advice or support to fellow builders. I can be contacted on Facebook @guitarsbyclutchcreations.

Happy building guys! Cheers Joe...■





Dr. Mac Arnold, USA

Photo: Andy Sheppard

Still showing us why...

Mac Arnold, Pelzer, South Carolina, USA

by Huey Ross

How many blues players hold an Honorary Doctor of Music degree? Buddy Guy and BB King are two I can think of. Or who springs to mind if you're a member of the CBG community? In 2014, Mac Arnold was awarded an honorary doctorate in music from the University of South Carolina and, seven years later, he's still showing us why.

What do you need to do to receive an honorary doctorate in music? Make no mistake – these degrees are not just handed out for no reason – they have to be earned! They are conferred on individuals who have made significant contributions to the world of music and the world of the arts. They are also known by the Latin phrase “honoris causa” (“for the sake of the honor”). The point is that honorary doctorates are to remind students and the community at large that, by virtue of their life experience, knowledge and character, there are people out there who stand out not only because of their endeavors, but because of their attitude to life and human values – people who act as an inspiration for others around them, encouraging them to believe in themselves and what they can do.

It's all out there – from his high school band J Floyd & The Shamrocks to today's Mac Arnold & Plate Full O' Blues, there's plenty of information on Mac's website (www.macarnold.com) and the internet.



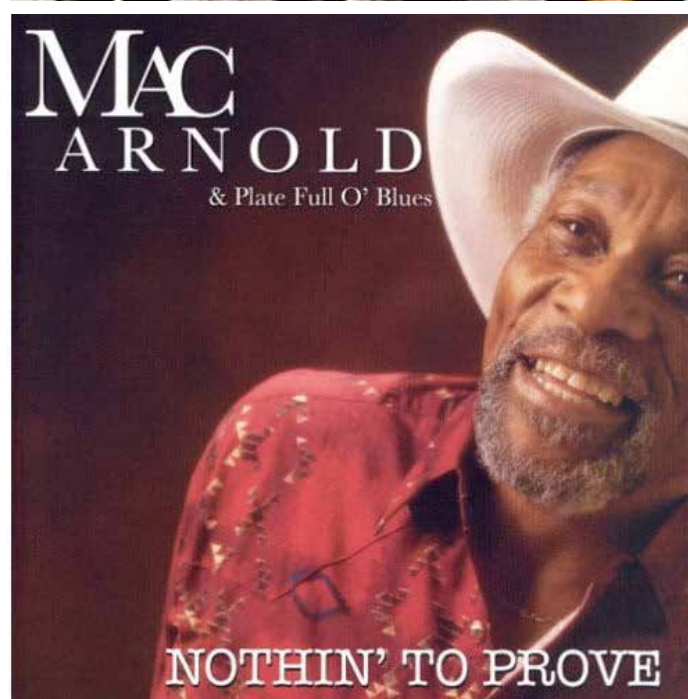
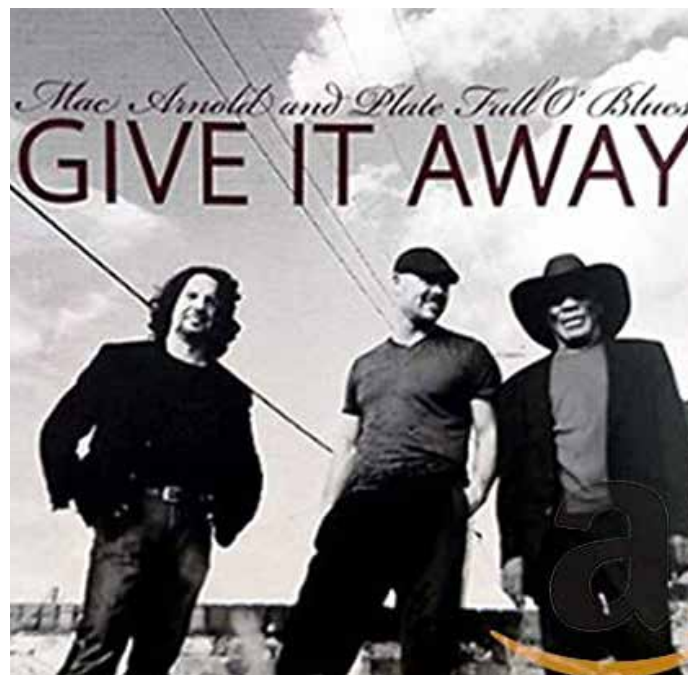
“ There are people out there who stand out not only because of their endeavors, but because of their attitude to life and human values”

I stumbled across this snippet on the internet that made me smile: *“Whenever I know I'm gonna have an extended amount of time at my desk, I just play music. I pulled up my uncle's music. My uncle Mac (Mac Arnold) is a pretty talented blues artist. And to this day, he is quick to give credit to my grandfather (his brother) for getting him “started” with guitar music. Something told me to check out my Unc's website for da heck of it to see what's going on with his touring. Da site was obviously updated and more pages were added. I thoroughly enjoyed this page and its audio of my grandfather (pop) explaining how it all started theoretically, by building da “first guitar” aka da “gas-can guitar”. He STILL uses these guitars to this day.” – Ant Pruitt's Mindless Site, 2011*

Mac Arnold (bass, gas-can guitar, vocals), Max Hightower (keyboards, harmonica, guitar, bass, vocals), Austin Brashier (lead guitar, vocals) and Dizzy Scott (drums, vocals) came together in 2006 to form the band Mac Arnold & Plate Full O' Blues. The story is well documented on their website and also in a two-part 2009 documentary entitled "Nothing to Prove: The Story of Mac Arnold's Return to the Blues" made by filmmaker Stan Woodward. The band has tirelessly toured around the east coast of the USA ever since, as well as playing international festivals and venues in Europe. With a bit of luck, we might see them again next year for a 2022 European tour.

"...a little solo that can only be described as timeless, essential roots blues"

You can hear about some of Mac's exploits in the lyrics of songs like "Backbone and Gristle" from the album of the same name about his upbringing in a farming family with 13 children. Then there's "Farmer" from the "Country Man" album where Mac learns how you reap what you sow, and "Gas can story," which begins with a narrative about how he took brother Leroy's homemade gas-can guitar and learned to play it left-handed, and why he plays a gas-can guitar to this day. After the



intro to “Gas can story,” Mac plays a little solo that can only be described as timeless, essential roots blues. Check out the band’s videos – one of my personal favorites is where Mac plays a little layback lead guitar on the gas-can guitar in the Albert King song “Don’t Throw Your Love On Me So Strong”?)¹

“Mac is clearly a product of the sixties Chicago blues era”

It’s no easy decision for a 23-year-old to pick up stakes and move to Chicago, but, in 1966, Mac decided he wanted to be a professional musician. He relates this experience in the song “Ghetto Blue” from the “Nothing to Prove” album telling us how he learned to sing the blues in Chicago, playing behind A.C. Reed (at the Green Bunny Club), then traveling from New York to San Francisco with *The Muddy Waters Band*, playing the clubs in southside Chicago with Tyrone Davis. Even Buddy Guy gets a mention in the song.

The Muddy Waters Band shared the stage with artists like Howlin’ Wolfe, Elmore James, Jimmy Reed, Junior Wells, Big Joe Williams, and Big Mama Thornton – and Mac is clearly a product of the sixties Chicago blues era. He also played

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w40a_RCI0k



on John Lee Hooker’s live album, “Live at the Café Au Go-Go,” as well as Otis Spann’s classic recording “The Blues is Where It’s At.” He went on to form *The Soul Invaders*, which backed up many artists, including *The Temptations* and B. B. King. The biography goes on – in the early seventies, he moved to California to work in television and recording. In the eighties, he moved back to South Carolina for what proved to be a relatively short retirement before *Mac Arnold & Plate Full O’ Blues* came into being.

Two of Mac’s original guitars are now on display in museums – his slide guitar “Maggie Mae” is on display at the Smithsonian Institute (no-one has asked for his original cowboy hat yet). In 2017, Mac was inducted into the Alabama Blues Hall of Fame.

“...our future’s right before our very eyes!”

So what about Dr. Mac’s philosophy? Mac’s had a lot of help and respect along the way, which has clearly filtered into his own world view. The song “I can do anything” from the Backbone and Gristle album is the basis for Mac and the band’s “I Can Do Anything Foundation” (<https://www.icandoanythingfoundation.org>) dedicated to the preservation of music and arts in the public school system and passing on the heritage of the





blues. School children sing in this song because, according to Mac, “our future’s right before our very eyes!” and “getting a child involved and excited about music will improve everything else that child does in school.” The Band brings young musicians up on stage during performances to give them “something they will never forget.”

Finally, the 2016 “Give It Away” album is a compilation of songs featuring each member of the band relating what inspires them, what they believe in and who they are. Mac’s brother Leroy’s influence comes to life in this album. Leroy even makes a cameo appearance in “Uncle DeWitt’s Cafe.” In the song “Nitty Gritty,” Mac sings “if it wasn’t for the blues, I would not be around.” On the other hand, I think the blues owes a debt

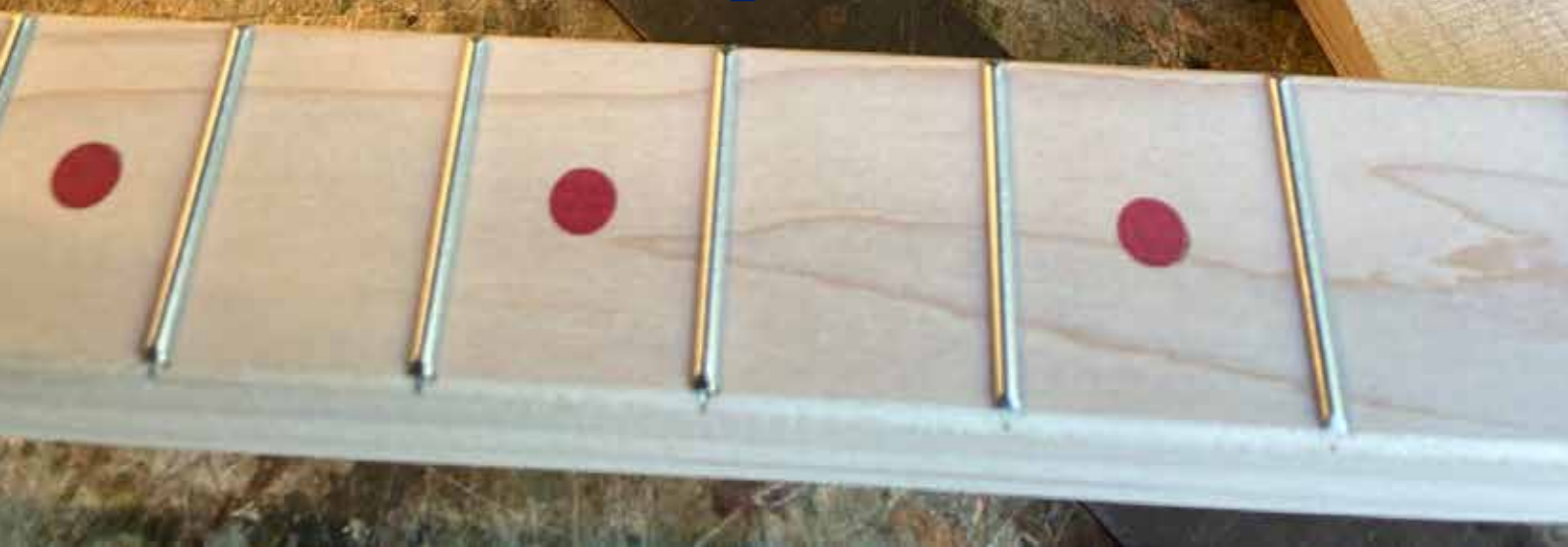
to Dr. Mac Arnold and friends for helping to give us a taste and appreciation of the way it was back then! Looking forward to the next album...☺ ■

<https://www.macarnold.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/drmacarnoldsblues>
<https://www.facebook.com/Mac-Arnold-Plate-Full-O-Blues-154979007871>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQT2bWcSOeZ5KBHnliErrEQ>

See also:
<https://www.icandoanythingfoundation.org/mac-arnold-the-band>
<https://www.folkstreams.net/films/nothing-to-prove>



**Black Diamond Cigar
Box Guitars, Australia**



What happened to Elmo Lee?

John Stax, Black Diamond Cigar Box Guitars, Menzies Creek, Victoria, Australia

I started making musical instruments in 1995 after reading a book on “How To Build Your Own Electric Guitar” by Melvin Hiscock. I was hooked! ...In 2010, after seeing a guy in Noosa playing a three-string cigar box guitar, I decided to start making my own and haven’t stopped. Now, 11 years on, I’m well into 400 plus builds.

CBGR: John, You grew up in Kent in the UK – do you remember the late 1950s skiffle craze?

John Stax: I was totally into skiffle in the early sixties. Back in the late '50s, Lonnie Donegan started the skiffle craze in the UK and it just took off. It originated from American folk, blues, country, bluegrass, jazz and jug bands. In fact, myself and a couple of guys I worked with on the building site at the time formed our own group. I played a banjo which originally belonged to my great grandfather who used to busk on the beaches. Great times!

You played bass and harmonica in The Pretty Things – why did you chose bass as your instrument?

When Dick Taylor, Phil May and I decided to form a band, there was no question that Dick would play lead guitar and Phil would sing (he couldn’t play but could hold a tune!). As we needed a bass

player and Dick still had the bass he played in Little Boy Blue and the Blue Boys with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards¹, I fell into that role. It kind of clicked with me and all of a sudden we had the beginnings of something. At the same time, I picked up the blues harp and fell into that.

1. In 1962, Dick Taylor formed Little Boy Blue And The Blues Boys with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. Brian Jones changed their name to the Rolling Stones, and Taylor switched from lead guitar to bass. Five months later, he swapped the Stones for art school, where he founded The Pretty Things.





How did you come up with the name, "The Pretty Things"?

We tossed around lots of names for the band and finally chose the Pretty Things as it was one of our favourite songs from one of our heroes Bo Diddley.

And heavily influenced by Chicago blues?

Right from the beginning we were heavily into Black American blues. Jimmy Reed, Slim Harpo, Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, Bo and Chuck. These were the guys that influenced us then, and now still for me.

You chose to go under the name "Stax" because of your fondness for the music produced by Stax Records?

I decided to change my name to something a bit cooler and easier to remember. John Fullagar didn't quite sound rock and roll.

What happened to Elmo Lee?

Elmo was an idea for my name in the early days, but he sadly passed away without too much fanfare! So Stax it was!

Who were some of the other groups coming out of London in the mid-sixties besides you guys?

Being on the road a lot, we bumped into most of the touring bands of the time. The Kinks, Spencer Davis, Small Faces, Moody Blues, Animals, Hendrix, etc. The list is huge. We were working seven days a week at the height of our popularity. We also had a residency at the 100 Club in Oxford St London.

The Pretty Things never went to the USA like a lot of the others?

We never got to tour the USA in my time with them due to the incompetence of our management, but the band toured

the States extensively in the years after I left. We did do Europe quite often though. Holland, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and all across Britain top to bottom continuously.

What about that legendary New Zealand tour?

It was a blast for us and made headlines in the news over there. You can read all about it in a book by Mike Stax from Ugly Things Magazine titled “Don’t Bring Me Down Under.” I’m sure he still has copies. 😊

Are there any extra special memories from your touring days that you’d like to share?

So many memories, but outstanding was a tour we did in France together with the legendary Bill Haley and the Comets. Also playing the Albert Hall in London with stars like Martha and the Vandellas,

Dionne Warwick, Gene Pitney, The Searchers and The Kinks.

After three successful albums, why did you decide to leave the band in 1967?

My days with the band lasted only about three years. I was on the first two albums and then left part way through the “Emotions” album for various reasons. Lack of work and money. I had a family to provide for, plus the changing direction the band was taking. We left the UK and traveled to Australia, mainly for a bit of a change in direction and a new start.

What was the music scene like in Australia when you arrived?

Totally different from what we were used to, especially coming from London at the time. For instance, no music on the radio that we recognized! Only local and a bit of American. The reason was there



was a radio ban on UK music due to radio stations not willing to pay royalties imposed on overseas music. We soon settled in to the local scene, though, and enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends.

The Blues scene in Oz was fairly small and mostly centered in Melbourne. The bands had similar influences as we did and, as well as being super confident, were also very progressive with their music. Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, Chain, Jeff St. John and Copperwine to name a few. Currently, we are blown away by Melbourne band *The Teskey Brothers*. If you haven't heard of them yet, then you're in for a treat!

“It was great to catch up with Phil and Dick again and a thrill to get to play with them on stage again”

You got to play with The Pretty Things a couple of times in Australia in later years?

The band did a tour here in 2012 and 2018. It was great to catch up with Phil and Dick again and a thrill to get to play with them on stage again. Just like the old days.

You played with Melbourne band R&B Blues Hangover for a while?

Together with great friends of mine – Dave Hogan, Warren Rough, Ken Farmer, Lucy De Soto and Pete Wells, we formed Blues



Hangover in 1996 and made a couple of albums. We had a lot of fun with the whole thing at the time.

You became a luthier in the mid-nineties building some amazing guitars and dulcimers...

I started making musical instruments in 1995 after reading a book on “How To Build Your Own Electric Guitar” by Melvin Hiscock. I was hooked! I built acoustic and solid six-string guitars. Bass and dulcimers. An acoustic Weissenborn made from Australian Blackwood (similar to Hawaiian Koa) and even a Hurdy Gurdy!

“I started making musical instruments in 1995 after reading a book on ‘How To Build Your Own Electric Guitar’”

Have you switched into mainly cigar box guitars now?

In 2010, after seeing a guy in Noosa playing a three-string cigar box guitar, I decided to start making my own and haven't stopped. Now, 11 years on, I'm well into 400+ builds. I was selling at markets and blues festivals over the years, but mainly online now. I have made many like-minded friends along the way, including Trevor Abraham (Chough Guitars), Shayne Soall, Greg McKinnon (Brookwood Guitars), etc. I also make the odd ukelele and short-scale cigar box bass. I build with original cigar boxes and most are imported from the US.





What's different about your CBGs compared to your fellow builders?

I like to add a few extra details giving some of them a point of difference, like the stainless steel edges and tailpiece. Also my fretted guitars have a carbon fiber rod set into the neck underneath the fingerboard to strengthen the neck and I like to use different timbers like American Rock Maple, South America Purple Heart and African Wenge.

“My favourite CBG is always the one I’ve just finished!”

Which of your builds are your favorites?

My favourite CBG is always the one I’ve just finished!

What's a Mortein resonator?

On my resonator CBGs, I use a Mortein resonator made from a “Mortein Mozzie” coil insect repellent can giving it a strident sound.

Everything is locked down just now – any plans for when things return to normal?

No plans to perform with CBGs as I’m happier building them rather than playing in public, although I do play a little at markets – just want to get back to some sort of normal like everyone else in this pandemic! ■

<http://www.cigarboxguitar.com.au>

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BSA CBG Festival



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Glad to be back!

The 9th BSA Cigar Box Guitar Festival Boissy-sans-Avoir, France by Gregoire Corby

On 6 October 2012, the ABCL (Association Boissy Culture and Leisure) organized their first cigar box guitar festival featuring musicians from France, England, Scotland, Australia and the USA. The event proved to be so successful that it was decided to organize a new festival each year on the first weekend in October. The BSA Cigar Box Guitar Festival was born!

It all started when two CBG enthusiasts, TheoMojo and Phil Hill Billy, decided to create an event to bring other CBG players and builders together. We can say that it's the only French festival completely dedicated to CBGs. On stage, performers have to play home-made instruments, which can be used for all kinds of music from blues to rock, folk and more. And it's free of charge thanks to the generous donations of sponsors.

“People can mingle with musicians and builders”



BSA CBG festival 2015
Justin Johnson



Big chief Jack Parker & Little Big Riri



Les Margouyots

Over the years, we have invited artists from not only France, but from all over the world like the USA, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Scotland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. The beauty of this kind of festival is that people can mingle with musicians and builders, buy an instrument or learn how to build one. Or take a lesson in how to play CBG or harmonica.

“Even though the weather might have been better, nobody was complaining”

Last year and until recently, Covid-19 wiped out the festival season in France as well as the rest of Europe and the UK. This year has been touch and go, but fortunately because the BSA traditionally takes place in the first week of October, we were able to hold the event. So even though the weather might have been better, nobody was complaining. I guess you could say that this was the first BSA festival to host only French performers due to Covid restrictions on traveling. Our guests this year were The Wealthy Hobos, Nicolas Millet, Les Margouyots, Raw Deal and Big Chief Parker and little Big Riri.

Next year we are going to celebrate our 10th BSA Cigar Box Guitar Festival. Hopefully, all will be back to normal and we can expect to see more of our international friends joining us. ■

<http://bsa-cbg-festival.fr>

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The Wealthy Hobos

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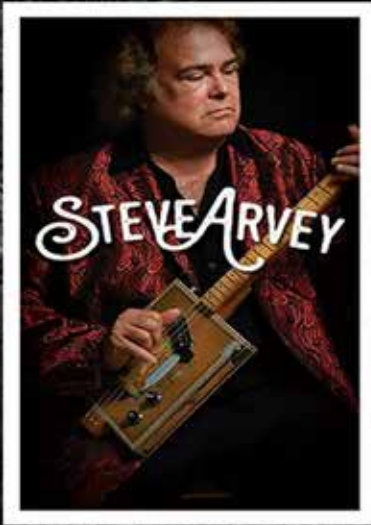
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Contributors

Jacob Green is a folk/blues singer/songwriter, one-man band and multi-instrumentalist. He has toured all around the USA, playing in 40 states, at one time averaging 150 shows a year. After settling in Vermont, Jacob has had some time to focus on recording new material as well as sort through the long back catalog of original music he's composed over the years inspired by his traveling days. He owns a collection of CBGs, which he uses to play his "foot-stompin'" blues.



Joe Oltean lives in Bundaberg, Australia, and has been creating custom-built guitars, art and unique furniture for nearly ten years. He enjoys using recycled materials like slabs of local wood, fence palings, driftwood and scrap metal, and is constantly experimenting with new styles and finishes, researching themes and adding intricate details to make genuine one-of-a-kind works of art. His motivation is to make his followers happy by "pushing the boundaries" with his creations.



Mac Arnold played bass guitar for the *Muddy Waters Band* in 1966. He also played on John Lee Hooker's album, "Live at the Café Au Go-Go" and Otis Spann's classic recording "The Blues is Where It's At." Mac was awarded an honorary doctorate in music from the University of South Carolina in 2014 and inducted into the Alabama Blues Hall of Fame in 2017. Since 2006, he has been performing with his band, *Mac Arnold & Plate Full O' Blues*. The band's "I Can Do Anything Foundation" is dedicated to the preservation of music, arts and the heritage of the blues.



John Fullagar, better known as John Stax, is an English musician who launched his musical career as the original bassist for the Pretty Things. He also frequently provided backing vocals and played harmonica. John left the band in January 1967 and emigrated to Australia in 1970, where he became a luthier in 1995 and currently builds and sells cigar box guitars. Well into 400+ builds, John's favourite CBG is always the one he's just finished!



Grégoire Corby was born in 1972 in Versailles, France, and works in logistics and IT. From 2014 to 2019, he was president of the ABCL (Association Boissy Culture and Leisure) in charge of the global organization of the BSA CBG festival until 2020. Because he takes a lot of pleasure in organizing and planning, as well as meeting people from all over, he now volunteers for the ABCL and continues to coordinate the artists and builders for the BSA festival.



Ross Hewitt a.k.a. Huey Ross was born in Australia in 1953 on BB King's birthday – the same year that color TVs and transistor radios appeared for sale in stores and the first James Bond novel was published. Over the years he has worked as a tennis teacher, journalist, translator, editor and graphic designer, and now lives in a village in Switzerland. He enjoys building and playing cigar box guitars, as well as editing and contributing to CBG Review.



Next issue: January 2022

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