



NEW CD RELEASED— The Rx Blues' new CD, called "Mississippi Moses," was released Dec. 12. Among the band members are, from left, Curt Barker, drummer; Big Al Winkeler, harmonica, guitar and vocals; Gwyddon Kelly, vocals; Jose Diaz, guitar; Randy Albert, key boards and vocals; and Kevin Kelly, bass player and vocals.

Rx Blues band members mark success with release of another CD

By Shannon Perschbacher
For the News Leader

By day, the members of Rx Blues carry on normal lives—they make their livings as surgeons, contractors, interpreters, dance instructors—but by night, they come together as an upbeat, rocking blues band.

Formed in 1992 by two Highland doctors, Rx Blues frequently performs in St. Louis area blues venues, and recently secured a regular Saturday night slot at Mike & Min's in Souldard, St. Louis, the oldest continuously operating blues bar in the city.

The group's new CD, "Mississippi Moses," was scheduled for release on Dec. 12, and consists of 14 songs, all composed by band members. "Moses" is the group's second album; its first, "Rainy Days," was released in April of 1997.

Rx Blues' six musicians include lead guitarist Jose Diaz, a surgeon in Highland, and the only original member left. In 1996, keyboard player and vocalist Randy Albert joined the band. Albert is originally from Prairie du Rocher, Ill., and has played in a number of local and area bands, including the Vincels, Stonewood, Surrender, Street Corner Symphony and The Heaters.

The next member to join was bass player Kevin Kelly, a Waterloo native who divides his time between performing and recording with RxBlues and traveling to Russia as an interpreter. Readers old enough to recall the 1960s may remember Kevin from the local group Wilder-

ness. He also played with Albert during the 1970s in Surrender.

All the members of the band are from the St. Louis area and pursue busy personal and professional lives apart from their musical endeavors. Singer and percussionist Gwyddon Kelly (no relation to Kevin) is a Celtic dance instructor; drummer Curt Barker works as a computerized-design specialist; and "Big Al" Winkeler works in construction.

The group enjoys the support and contributions of a number of other talented people. The new CD features two songs written by Jeff Davis, who just happens to be a physician's assistant in Diaz's office. Davis also helped out with guitar and vocals.

Background vocals on the CD are added by the "Triple XXX" Singers: Coreada Kelly (Gwyddon's sister), Karen Kirk of Columbia and Laurel Kelly of Waterloo, Kevin Kelly's wife.

On its new album, the band has 14 of its original songs. While the songs cover a wide range of tempos and moods, nearly every one will get your feet tapping along. As Kelly put it, "This is not a 'cry in your beer' band."

Two standouts on the album are "Big Head Franklin" and "Lonely Will Turn You Inside Out."

"Big Head Franklin," one of Albert's songs, is very upbeat, with lyrics that you can't help but smile at. Albert sings that it takes "big

head franklins," or money, to deal with speeding tickets, a materialistic girlfriend and the IRS.

"Lonely" was penned by Gwyddon Kelly, with music by the band. Over seven and a half minutes long, the powerful song gives her a chance to put on a show with her voice, and the band a chance to strut its stuff as well.

The album is a great listen, but I'm sure that hearing the group live adds something even more to their music. Blues seems to be a certain music genre that is even better in person.

The good news is that Rx Blues plays frequently enough that you can catch them live. In addition to the regular Saturday night slot at Mike & Min's in Souldard, this Saturday the band's regular gig will double as a CD release party for "Moses." Another upcoming show is Friday, Jan. 22, at Main Street Bar and Grill in Columbia, Ill.

At its shows you can expect a lot of up-tempo, danceable blues by such artists as Muddy Waters, Albert King, Keb Mo, Bonnie Raitt, and many others.

For more information about the band's performance schedule, you can check out the group's website at www.rxblues.com. Fans can visit, hear cuts from the CDs, and order either of the group's albums. Those not on the Internet can find their CDs locally at Main Street Music in Waterloo, and at a number of St. Louis area outlets, including Vintage

Vinyl.

As far as future plans, the band is committed first and foremost to becoming the premiere blues band in the St. Louis area and promoting blues music in general. The members plan to continue writing and recording on their own label, Kode Blue Records, and performing not only in the St. Louis area, but regionally throughout the Midwest and beyond. They opened recently at the Generations in south St. Louis for national blues act Long John Hunter, and will be performing at a number of similar venues in the near future.

The group receives a great deal of support from KDHX FM 88.1, community radio in St. Louis. The band was recently featured on two KDHX shows: the "Bluesday" show Thursday, Dec. 10 and on Art Dwyer's "Blues in the Night" show Friday, Dec. 11.

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