

To Hellendale And Back with the New Blues Revolution



By Dan Harr

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Southern California-based group New Blues Revolution is a blues-inspired journey through the form of Robert Johnson meets Quentin Tarantino via Pink Floyd. NBR’s latest CD, *To Hellendale And Back*, is the result of yet another stop on the road to create the music they want us all to hear. Each song/story tries to inspire a hypnotic state via strong grooves and a variety of emotion, from dark revelation to fun intrigue then romantic reflection.

Music News Nashville (MNN) recently spoke with two members of the band, singer/front-person Bill Grisolia (BG), and guitarist, Chap Cooper (CC).

MNN: What is the meaning behind the group's name, 'New Blues Revolution'?

BG: Chap and I agreed that the British-influenced blues of the Sixties, in combination with traditional blues forms, would become our focus as we write and perform new material. We came across the New Blues movement in England and decided to grab the torch and run with it. They called the New Blues movement a “revolution” so we adopted the name, the New Blues Revolution. We acknowledge and honor the past and try to expand its musical and lyrical boundaries. We feel the name successfully conveys both ideas. As the genre is described in Wikipedia, it is a “contemporized form of the deep blues.... akin to the British blues boom of the mid 1960s”. The revolution part of the name is all about our tribute and *contribution* to the blues genre which we deeply embrace. We want to bring our artistry and experience to the blues community and embrace and contribute to the rich tradition of the blues. We wish to help revitalize, re-invigorate and re-invent the blues and make new friends world-wide. The New Blues Revolution helps lead the vanguard of the New Blues here in the United States. Avant garde!

MNN: A lot of bands are at musical odds with the "blues establishment" these days because their music is slightly left-of-center, and NBR seems to be in that category. Care to comment on this?

CC: Bill and I both love the Blues. The Blues are about expression, emotion, conviction, abandonment and so much more. The Blues can be raw or beautiful. It's not “paint by numbers” as it seems today, is it? Why do so many Blues bands sound like the zillion Blues bands before them? Same chords, same riffs, same progression, same style. Are they all copying the same song? I believe that the Blues greats wrote about life experience that changed daily. You didn't hear them doing the same song over and over again. NBR always incorporates traditional Blues inspiration into our songs because we love it. To us, this is the ultimate respect for the true essence of the Blues. To turn the Blues into a stock template is not our thing.

MNN: Few bands sell CDs anymore, other than at gigs; downloads dominate the music landscape. Many venues, and even festivals, don't even want to pay the talent they hire. How does a band make money in the ultra-challenged music world of 2016?

BG: In our popular music culture, (has) developed a term called the DIY ethos: “Do It Yourself”. We have produced our own recordings, large concerts, festivals and toured nationally and internationally. We feel privileged and honored to be doing what we are doing. It is not for the “faint of heart”; one must have faith. If not for the fans we meet every time we play or our music is shared, we would not know that this music – this intellectual property – has value. It resonates with others besides ourselves. Our challenge is to continue to bring this music to our fans and new people alike. In ways that are creative and help us put food on the table. Our new CD is our first (also) online: please download it: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/newbluesrevolution1> In the markets

where we work, our fans are our economic power. In new markets, our music and performance are what draws new fans and excites people about “the Revolution”!

CC: We have to wear a lot of different hats. We try to make money via CD and swag sales at the shows, Internet sales, music leasing and sales, sponsorships and special events. We also do bar mitzvahs - Just kidding! (laughs) On second thought... Sure we would! Great question. It's an answer in progress.

MNN: Let's talk a little bit about the new album, "To Hellendale And Back". What were you going for, sound- and feel-wise, with this recording?

CC: We were shooting for moody, groove and personality. Bill's vocals are not about chops, they are about emotional connectivity, same with the guitars and other instruments. NBR's main emphasis is on composition, tone and multiple styles. We also like to be a little quirky and fun and not take ourselves too seriously. Recording-wise, we like to be able to perform whatever we record. In the future, we will probably bring in more electronics.

MNN: Bill, you've also promoted a few festivals recently. Does that have any impact on the band?

BG: Yes, we produce our own large concerts and festivals. Chapman, aka (New Blues Revolution guitarist) Chap Cooper, is a professor at Cypress College; and previously at Long Beach City College. He was the General Manager of the most famous independent regional music store in Long Beach for a decade. He was *the* guitarist in the *house* band of one of the most famous nightclubs on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood back in the heyday. I am privileged and honored to work with him both in the band and on these productions. The impact of these events on the band cannot be overstated: it is HUGE. Recently, the festivals are produced under the moniker of the “New Blues” too. We are preparing to produce our fourth festival; we produce the annual one in Long Beach and have produced another in the High Desert of California at a new, large baseball stadium. We brought in the legendary Woodstock band, Canned Heat, for that one. We lead the new blues both in our music and that of others.

MNN: Do either of you have lives (translated: careers/work) outside of playing and making music?

CC: I design sound systems for concert venues, theaters, clubs, churches, restaurants, schools, etc. Years ago as a player, my band had a problem of not keeping gigs. I later realized that bad sound was seriously affecting my pocket book (and) our ability to get better gigs. After blowing up everything at least twice, I started to really learn about sound. Today, as a sound system contractor and FOH mixer, I have done hundreds of gigs and major sound installations. I have spent countless hours in the studio as well. I feel that this expertise is a strong asset to NBR for a variety of reasons. I also teach Audio at a local College.

MNN: It's an election year, so this question is in play: Who ya got (i.e. who are you each voting for, and why)?

BG: My grandfather was jailed by the Fascist Dictator of Spain. I am a unionist and a radical. I do not like soulless corporations, US-owned (or) international, because they have no soul and no heart; they are not people. These are some strong reasons why I became a delegate to the 2004 and 2008 Democratic National Conventions; the latter of which I was a Hillary delegate and then supported Barak Obama. Either Hillary or Bernie will make a great president; I will support the nominee.

CC: I am an Independent who is fed up with the status quo of our two-party system. Roger Daltry, lead singer for the Who said it best: "Meet The New Boss, Same as the Old Boss" (from the Who song, 'Won't Get Fooled Again'). So, no mainstreamer for me. I believe in social responsibility and fiscal conservatism. I am done with hearing people speak to me while they say nothing. Trump, Sanders ticket? Hmm...However, I am an American and a patriot first!

MNN: Let's give a little love to the NBR rhythm section - who are the band's bassist and drummer?

BG: Roger Beall - Drummer\Vocals "The band does have a non-stop powerhouse drummer in Roger Beall" LA Times (Jim Washburn). Roger has shared the stage with notables such as Blue Oyster Cult, Steppenwolf, The Dixie Dregs, Mickey Gilley, TSOL and Agent Orange. Roger leads and presents drum and percussion workshops in the US as well as Europe. He designed, built, owns and operates Foundation Rock Studio in Long Beach, CA. Roger and Chap had wanted to work together for many years. They knew each other and graduated from the same high school. I met Roger at the Line Nine Blues Jam at the El Dorado restaurant in Long Beach and suggested we all work together.

Robert "Bob" Byrnes - Bass Guitar\Vocals - Born in Chicago, Bob started playing guitar at age seven, took classical lessons for four years and then switched to bass in high school. Bob moved to Los Angeles and formed The Chicago Sound Experience with fellow Chicagoan and record producer Lee Popa. They recorded a tribute album to blues legend Willie Dixon and went to Japan to promote it. He played with Michael McDonald at the NBA All-star game half time show at The Staples Center. He hooked up with LA-based guitarist Katya (as seen on VH1 Rock Fantasy Camp) and played the LA club scene. I found him working with Albert Parks in LA Parks & Wrecks which played the New Blues Festival; later we played together at Albert's birthday party and I recruited him to play with NBR.

MNN: Big Reveal Time: What's the NBR plan for World Musical Domination going forward?

CC: Traveling North, South, West and East to who knows where. The Internet is probably the biggest focus for us. We would like to be more involved in for-pay-streaming Internet concerts.

MNN: Best way for your fans (and those that want to be) to keep up on the latest NBR goings-on (Facebook, website, et al)?

BG: Yes, Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TheNewBluesRevolution> and our website www.NewBluesRevolution.com are up-to-date and there is a calendar link on the main website. We send occasional special show updates to our fans (Thousands OMG!). We can always use more communication!