



## Q&A with Bill Grisolia & Chap Cooper (New Blues Revolution): Helps to lead the vanguard of the New Blues in US

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## New Blues Revolution: US Soundtrack

New Blues Revolution is the brain child of **singer Bill Grisolia from Spain and guitarist Chap Cooper from the USA**. Brought together by their strong love for the blues, they decided to forge ahead with their own blues creations with British 60's and 70's influence. Little did they know that across the pond in England a new genre was also in the making - The New Blues Revolution. This new genre was being led by such artists as John Mayer, Joe Bonamassa and the White Stripes. **New Blues Revolution album "From Hellendale and Back" (2016) is a blues inspired journey from Robert Johnson via Quentin Tarantino to Pink Floyd**. NBR music is meant to be haunting, hypnotic, vibrant and lyrically playful, yet deep and emotional. Imagine a gifted young singer/pianist growing up on the coast of Spain honing his chops throughout the clubs of Valencia. Half-way around the world, imagine a young guitarist growing up in Los Angeles, playing rhythm guitar for members of the Yardbirds and Paul Butterfield Blues band at the age of 12. Both would continue to explore their musical journey and go on to play many of the most famous venues in the world. Not long ago, their paths and collective pasts would collide together in the creation and concept of the "New Blues Revolution".



The band leads the vanguard of the new blues movement in the U.S. (think John Mayer, White Stripes, Joe Bonamassa, and Black Keys). In 2016 they returned for the third time to play NAMM for the kickoff party and will return to play at the House of Blues, Anaheim, the Whiskey A-Go-Go, and the Coach House as well as concerts and festivals which, in 2015, took them from San Diego to San Francisco. They've opened for a diverse range of music legends including Macy Gray, Leon Russell, Canned Heat, Rick Derringer, David Lindley, Starship, and Kathy Segal-Garcia. Forging a unique, distinctive style featuring Bill Grisolia's vocals and piano and Chap Cooper's guitar, the band brings exciting showmanship to a mix of high-energy songs – deep, modern, rocky but soulful.



## Interview by Michael Limnios

**What do you learn about yourself from the Rock n' Roll music and culture?  
What does the blues mean to you?**

**Bill:** One day at a time. Some days I learn more than others. I learned the recipe for success is failure. Thomas Watson, the founder of IBM, suggests we “double our rate of failure” as a formula for success. They say Edison discovered 1,000 ways not to invent a lightbulb. In our popular music culture, I learned the DIY ethos: “Do It Yourself”. When my first record company folded and I was left holding the metal mothers and stampers, I learned how to press my own vinyl singles. I learned to rise every time I fall like Mandela. This is a path of discovery. Discovery of self. The journey is the destination. Keep learning or start dying. From our old interview back in 2012, I mentioned that in the song, “All You Need is Love”, John and Paul suggest “To learn how to be you in time”; and that Russell Simmons wrote a book and chapter by the title, “Be You”. Famously, Shakespeare said, “To Thine Own Self Be True”. Being you - becoming more you than ever before. Becoming authentic, sincere. Free of additives and artificial sweeteners! I learn about fear, character, inequality and social justice. Thank God for Rock ‘n Roll. And the blues that spawned it. To repeat, Hooker said, “Blues is a Healer”. It is a universal language. It is our life blood.

**Chap:** Rock n' Roll for me was more about musical freedom, rebellion, the street, aggression, indulgence and a whole new culture. It was an attitude. However, it seems to have been forgotten. For myself, the Blues is much like Rock n' Roll in spirit, but with a different focus. For me, the Blues has less indulgence, more reflection, a sense of maturity, and yet is still very passionate.



*"The blues is always with us because it most eloquently speaks to the human condition; our strutting and fretting; the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune; our mortality and the desire to love and be loved."*



**When was your first desire to become involved in the blues and who were your first idols?**

**Bill:** BB King was a first seminal artist for me with the “Thrill is Gone”. Listening to AM Radio in the 60’s exposed me to many musics including blues, rhythm and blues, Motown, soul, folk, rock-a-billy, pop, rock and roll, and British invasion. Loved songwriting and studied the all these styles, songs, and groups; particularly, the Beatles. Found a treasured set of 78 RPM vinyl records from my parents which included jazz, big-band, swing and the blues; everything from Count Basie to Satchmo (Louis Armstrong) to Al Hirt. Bob Dylan was a favorite artist and Dylan “going electric” led me to a love of the electric guitar along with the open tunings and styling of British artists fascinated with blues like Keith Richards, Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton. My first concert was the Rolling Stones after the Exile on Main Street album. Wonderlove opened. I saw Stevie the next year on his first national tour. I saw Clapton in ’75 and Santana opened. My mom played piano and we had one in our house. Taught myself over the years; as Cicero said, “I’m still learning.” The rollicking rhythms of Boogie Woogie always excited me. As Charlie Watts said and Jools Holland Concurred, Boogie Woogie is the basis of everything, swing, rock-and-roll. I followed Leon Russell and Mad Dogs and Englishmen – loved the vocal stylings of Joe Cocker. I loved what all the pianists did with the Stones and others: Ian Stewart, Nicky Hopkins, Ian McLagan (Faces\Small Faces), Chuck Leavell, Jools Holland and, of course, what Billy Preston did with the Beatles at the end of their career. How could you not love the Blues Brothers?

**Chap:** My Father played guitar and I first picked it up at 5 or 6. First Idols: My Dad and Motown.

**Tell me about the beginning of New Blues Revolution’s music. How did you choose the name and where did it start?**

**Bill:** Chap and I started writing songs together when he joined Bill Grisolia & the Attachments as the guitarist. The bad suggested we simplify the name and we became the Bill Grisolia Band – “BGB” for short. After a hiatus, Chap and I decided to take our writing in another direction – with an emphasis on his guitar and my vocals. We made a conscious decision to work in the blues genre. We wanted to bring our artistry and experience to the party and embrace and contribute to the rich tradition of the blues. Our name? It came from our goal to contribute musically to what is happening currently. We researched our favorites like the Black Keys, Joe Bonamassa, Derek Trucks, Susan Tedeschi, and John Mayer and found a movement in music called the New Blues. A new genre! We loved this music. When we found this movement on Wikipedia, we knew we wanted to be a part of it, the “contemporised form of the deep blues... akin to the British blues boom of the mid 1960s”. When they called the movement a revolution, we had to agree. That is when 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 elements.





*"Rock n' Roll for me was more about musical freedom, rebellion, the street, aggression, indulgence and a whole new culture. It was an attitude. However, it seems to have been forgotten."*

**Are there any memories with members of the Yardbirds and Paul Butterfield Blues Band, which you'd like to share with us?**

**Chap:** I was 11 years old when I met the guitarist of the then touring Yardbirds. He was dating the girl next door who used to be my babysitter. He and his mates would have jams next door and I would watch them all day long while always getting a lesson afterwards. He showed me many of the patterns I still use today. He had me play rhythm guitar on a few local gigs together and then he went back on the road. I am still realizing to this day how great those moments were.

**Are there any memories for Tab Benoit, Macy Gray, Leon Russell, Rick Derringer, Burt Bacharach, Blood Sweat & Tears, Three Dog Night, David Lindley, and Michael Burks, which you'd like to share with us?**

**Bill:** There are moments with each of these artists which are priceless to me. As I mentioned, I followed Leon Russell, I saw him perform in my native Kansas City. One of my greatest career highs was to open for him with Chap. Got to meet his daughter who also played the show. Tab too was gracious when we played the now-defunct world-famous "Palomino"; recently Chap and I played with him at the St. Rocke in Hermosa Beach. Tab is so "down home" after the show, hanging outside on the porch having a drink and a smoke – a regular guy like you and me. Macy was wild before our show, kicking out everybody from backstage, then commandeering a golf cart and crashing it. Loved Rick Derringer playing in front of a big fan for comfort and to continuously blow his long hair. Three Dog Night were very gentlemanly - and happy to be doing what they are doing after all these years. All the young horn guys supporting Blood, Sweat & Tears – more than 130 musicians have gigged in that band in 30 years! Loved meeting Lindley on the Running On Empty Tour when he was playing with Jackson Browne and talking with him then – he was the first "name" musician with whom I considered collaborating. To play the same venue years later and talk with him about those years was a real treat. I created a concert series which first star was Johnny Mathis (for whom I opened). But of all, opening for Burt Bacharach and Dionne Warwick was a singular experience. It was that triumvirate of Bacharach, Warwick and the lyricist, Hal David that really gets me going. I loved Burt's hits throughout my childhood and then I got to see\watch\hear him on his collaborations and eventual tour with Elvis Costello – also at the top of my list. I got to meet Elvis with Burt and later, spend some time with Burt and his son at the Grammys. Brief backstage moment at the Grammys: Elton John drops out of the finale. Tish Fein, the producer, throws together Luther Vandross, Crosby Stills and Nash and Booker T and the MG's to do "Love the One You're With"; she backed them with a choir! And I got to sit in on the rehearsal at the Shrine. Priceless.

*Bill & Chap / Photo by Rik Boose*





*"Our name? It came from our goal to contribute musically to what is happening currently. We researched our favorites like the Black Keys, Bonamassa, Trucks & Tedeschi, and John Mayer and found a movement in music called the New Blues. A new genre! We loved this music."*

### **How do you describe New Blues Revolution's music?**

**Bill:** Like most of us, we find it easier in an era of "information overload" to pigeonhole our music. Some would call it blues-rock. To those quick to label our sound, beware: we have more than one arrow in our quiver! You will hear elements of many popular music (again, we grew up listening to the American soundtrack) notably, pop and rock. But you will also hear swamp, porch, guitar instrumentals and rave-ups for example. We like to think we have something to contribute and give back through the filters of our perception and experience. It is far more than Jeff Beck meets Billy Joel.

**Chap:** As the British honored and interpreted the blues in the 60's, that's what NBR is doing today.



## **How do you describe New Blues Revolution sound and songbook?**

**Bill:** When we talked at the beginning of our journey, 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. 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”. Chap and I started modeling the sound based on our previous work together and our experience and we wrote the body of material which became Revolution #9, our first CD. Voices from a roar to a whisper. Guitars raucous to plaintive tones. One multiplatinum producer said, “Monster” guitar. Another industry veteran said, “the last of the great blues guitarists”. Our new work continues with the exploration we have been doing with those original tunes as we perform them live and new material we have been writing on the road. Sonically, we have continued to embrace the lower tones of the baritone guitar which figures prominently in some of the songs on our new EP, “To Hellendale and Back”. Last time we spoke, I mentioned having “more than one arrow in our quiver”; sonically we are all over the map. You would laugh if I told you the number of artists to which our music is compared. There are so many elements we incorporate. People hear so many things. It’s only natural, as we have been influenced by so many. AM radio figured prominently initially in our upbringing and then FM and album orientation. Lyrically, the songs continue to progress in both the great themes of love and loss, but continue to explore the American experience, new, fresh - with its downs and ups which are exciting, and exhilarating. There is a circular element to the songs\songbook and a circus element too. We can’t wait to find out what is under the big top!

**Chap:** The spirit of the blues guides us to be free in what we create, feel and experience. We simply want to create New Blues material in the same way it was originally created. Our Songs reflect the “Life Journey” we have been traveling for years. Imagine a Robert Johnson infused, Quentin Tarantino via Pink Floyd adventure. That’s NBR today, tomorrow- who knows?





*"Over the years I have met, played and worked with many "big and not so big" names in the music biz. Everyday was a joy. Everyday is still a joy. Best advice: Don't take yourself too seriously- enjoy the ride." (Chap Cooper / Photo by Rik Boose)*

**What was the first gig you ever went to and what were the first songs you learned?**

**Chap:** My first gig (school talent show) was in 3rd grade with me playing guitar with an accordionist. The first complete songs I learned: Lets see...Whispering Winds, Happy Birthday. At least I remember one of them.

**Which was the best moment of your career and which was the worst?**

**Bill:** Best Early moment: Two thousand people giving me a standing ovation at Hoke Hall Auditorium, University of Kansas, Summer 1974 when I was 16 years old, after singing an original composition and accompanying myself on the piano. It was like crack. I've been chasing the dragon ever since. Best moment lately: singing "LA" Woman at the Whisky a Go-Go on the Sunset Strip and channeling Jim Morrison. "Into your blues," indeed! Worst moment: Robbed of my tips by a "fan" after playing Hollywood; broke, homeless, hungry and cold.



**How/where do you get inspiration for your songs and who were your mentors in songwriting?**

**Bill:** Simply living each day brings plenty of inspiration as we confront the joys and challenges of everyday living. Please listen to our song, "Blue Café" for our treatise on existentialism. I always loved songwriting and studied the all the AM Radio styles, songs, and groups; particularly, the Beatles. I wanted to know what they were saying. Bob Dylan was a favorite artist. My pyramid of English rock: the Beatles, the Stones and the Who. Songwriters? Lennon\McCartney, the Glimmer Twins, Townsend, Leiber and Stoller, the Quincy\Jones Barry Gordy hit factory, Philadelphia's Gamble and Huff, Stax, Muscle Shoals, Tin Pan Alley, the Brill Building and this is just stream of consciousness! Prince's revolution, the Time et al. And those along the road, for example, Dan Navarro and his late partner, Eric Lowen, who wrote "We Belong" (a hit for Pat Benatar): we opened for them at the House of Blues and, when I got cancer, they sang back-up on our Blue Café CD. They were brilliant in the studio like the Everly Brothers and wrote harmonies so fast – as fast as reportedly Beachboy Brian Wilson – they came up with multiple harmonies track after track. Their "turn of a phrase" always knocked me out. Hal David, first president of ASCAP and famous lyricist was part of one of the most successful triumvirates in pop along with composer Burt Bacharach and vocalist Dionne Warwick. Hal was always very encouraging about my songwriting. I invited him to surprise Burt and Dionne at their show which I produced. I opened the show with my band. Years later, I got to play privately again for him and he was more enthusiastic than ever about my songwriting.



*"I am a hopeful romantic and every day the messages of Spain and the Mediterranean to the US and from the US there get stronger and stronger. With this high tech, soon follows high touch – and we will meet soon my friend!" (Bill Grisolia / Photo by Rik Boose)*

**What does the Blues offer you? What do you learn about yourself from the music?**

**Bill:** Hooker: "Blues is a healer"!! I learn about myself from music most days, good and bad - some days more than others. I learn about my character flaws and character assets. When I fail...and when I rise to the human condition. In the song, "All You Need is Love", John and Paul said "To learn how to be you in time"; Russell Simmons said, "Be You" and wrote a book and chapter by the same title. Shakespeare said, "To Thine Own Self Be True". Being you - becoming more you than ever. Becoming authentic, sincere...free of additives and artificial sweeteners! Confront personal demons, issues of character and maturity, inequality and social justice. I want to live a spirited life full of the Holy Spirit; the Great Spirit!

**Chap:** The unknown, expectation and realization. A universal language. Everything...Love, Devotion and Surrender



**Which is the most interesting period in your life and why?**

**Bill:** The most interesting period in my life is today, reliving my career for this interview and thinking about the future, but, most of all, living in the now, this precious moment we are all given. That is why they call it “the present” because it is a gift. All the past mistakes, the ones I make every day, all the plans, don’t mean a thing if you ain’t enjoying the moment...as John Lennon memorialized, “Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans”. My today is better than ever.

**Chap:** It’s always now, Life happens in the moment. I love it!

**Which acquaintances have been the most important experiences? What was the best advice anyone ever gave you?**

**Bill:** I am so blessed to have met so many great people in my few short years. I have had the honor of meeting three Presidents – maybe a fourth this year. However, of all, musically, I became acquainted with Chapman Cooper; he became the most important musical influence of my life. I call him my chief creative collaborator. While I have “played in a thousand bands” and written with many talented people, Chap is unmatched in his virtuosity, vast experience and visceral and intellectual approach to composition and performance. Long ago, he became my friend. It is said that the most difficult thing we do is to have an intimate relationship with another human being. Songwriting and performing is that way. I thank God for this experience. Best Advice: Stanley Clark told me to “Relax”.

**Chap:** Over the years I have met, played and worked with many “big and not so big” names in the music biz. Everyday was a joy. Everyday is still a joy. Best advice: Don’t take yourself too seriously- enjoy the ride.



*"I miss the general appreciation of musical variety in popular music. However, I am excited that via the internet its a musical feast of every flavor and more." (Photo by Rik Boose)*

**What's the best jam you ever played in? What are some of the most memorable gigs you've had?**

**Bill:** Best jam: tonight...with any luck. One of my most memorable gigs was my first international gig at the age of 19. I performed my original songs and sang in English at the top jazz club in Valencia, Spain called Tres Triste Tigres. I played it as a duo with my friend, Steve Richter, on flute.

**Chap:** Typically I don't jam that often. I prefer to write and then explore with my bandmates. However, I remember a few smokey rooms, really late at night. Beautiful lines kept happening - we were true Blues Explorer's.

**Which of historical blues personalities would you like to meet? From whom have you have learned the most secrets about blues music?**

**Bill:** Boogie Woogie pianists Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis, Fats Waller, Fats Domino, Johnnie Johnson, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, and Dr. John...the Night Tripper.

**Chap:** Jeff Beck, Mick Abrams, John Cipollina, Ritchie Blackmore, Leslie West, BB King, Howlin Wolf , Steppenwolf, early Cream, Hendrix and Jimmy Page.



**Some music styles can be fads but the blues is always with us. Why do think that is? Give one wish for the BLUES**

**Bill:** The blues is always with us because it most eloquently speaks to the human condition; our strutting and fretting; the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune; our mortality and the desire to love and be loved. My Wish for the blues is that “the blues” continues to re-vitalize and re-invent itself and gain new friends and family world-wide. The New Blues Revolution helps to lead the vanguard of the New Blues here in the United States.

**Chap:** It’s like money and things, when you die, it’s about people and you’re relationships. It’s the same with the Blues, after you strip all the other stuff away. For it to always evolve.



*"I want to live a spirited life full of the Holy Spirit; the Great Spirit!, I can testify that the spirit is working in my life showering me with blessings." (Photo: New Blues Revolution on stage)*

## **What characterize the sound and music philosophy of Bill Grisolia and Chap Cooper?**

**Bill:** We play because we must. Pablo Casals said at 93 that he practiced every day because he thought he might be getting good at it. As I mentioned when last we spoke, I like to get “in the flow”, in the “ether”...let the music play itself! I’m self-taught. While I believe in study, it can be self-study. Pulitzer Prize winner, Malcolm Gladwell talks about 10,000 hours as being the threshold of expertise. Rack up them hours. My Sound is characterized by my vocal and theatrical range. On the one hand, a Monster voice, but capable of extreme subtlety. A whisper and a cry - a growl and a murmur...a gale force and...a caress. One fan, who also knew Thelonious Monk, once said of my piano playing, that I shared with Monk the ability to coax a lot of emotion out of one note. It is not the quantity, but the quality. I hope to be able to do that too with the space between the notes. And the space between us all! I like to “get ‘em goin!”... I have been compared to some of my favorites like Bruce Springsteen and Exile on Main Street. Often rollicking, barrelhouse, playing the rhythm, stomping...strum it, bang it, poke it...after all, the piano belongs to the percussion family! I like to pick it up and carry it! As to my music philosophy, I like to get “in the flow”, in the “ether”...let the music play itself!

**Chap:** I am a product of many and yet have a responsibility to their influences; to do my own thing - as they did! Love, Devotion, Surrender.

## **What experiences in your life make you a GOOD BLUESMAN? How would you describe your contact to people when you are on stage?**

**Bill:** Love lost and won. Life short and long: surviving cancer and another live-threatening illness. Not shooting myself in the foot. Homelessness. And all those women, cars and credit cards!

**Chap:** Again, Love Devotion and Surrender!! Hopefully cerebral.

## **What do you miss most nowadays from the music of past? What are your hopes and fears for the future of?**

**Bill:** No nostalgia here. I think the present allows us ways to connect musically like never before. The challenge is to sift out what you like – what resonates with you – from the information avalanche. Hope – closer and closer combination of digital and analog; one world. Become the Andrew Carnegie of pianos and strew them across the universe like Johnny Appleseed. Fear – lack of support for local musicians; global warming.

**Chap:** I miss the general appreciation of musical variety in popular music. However, I am excited that via the internet its a musical feast of every flavor and more.





*"Like most of us, we find it easier in an era of "information overload" to pigeonhole our music. Some would call it blues-rock. To those quick to label our sound, beware: we have more than one arrow in our quiver! You will hear elements of many popular music (again, we grew up listening to the American soundtrack) notably, pop and rock."*

**If you could change one thing in the musical world and it would become a reality, what would that be?**

**Bill:** Easily amplify a piano.

**Chap:** That a high level of musical education be mandatory for every student in this country. I believe this would solve many issues and have a significant impact on our culture and productivity.

**Are there any memories from gigs, jams, open acts and studio sessions which you'd like to share with us?**

**Bill:** The moments on tour in 2016 seem to top any of the old days. Playing the new music with a crack band at important stages like NAMM, the House of Blues, the Mint and the Whiskey a Go Go are bringing new musical and performance highs. Two of our shows this year rank in the top 5 of my life. Something is happening here.

**What are the lines that connect the legacy of Rock n' Blues from Spain and Mediterranean area to United States?**

**Bill:** The lines have converged into a “web, a “veil” – there is so much every day - every nanosecond - the communities become closer and closer. These ways of listening and collaborating bring us closer and closer. I am a hopeful romantic and every day the messages of Spain and the Mediterranean to the US and from the US there get stronger and stronger. With this high tech, soon follows high touch – and we will meet soon my friend!



*"Love lost and won. Life short and long: surviving cancer and another live-threatening illness. Not shooting myself in the foot. Homelessness. And all those women, cars and credit cards!"*

**What are the lines that connect the legacy of Blues with Rock n' Roll and continue to Folk and Southern Boogie?**

**Chap:** Man's struggle to be happy, his will to use music as his mightiest tool, rebel, rejoice. As to Boogie'n... Again REJOICE!



**What is the impact of Rock n' Blues music and culture to the racial, political and socio-cultural implications?**

**Bill:** This may be the most important question of all to me. In 2012, I told you “I want to live a spirited life full of the Holy Spirit; the Great Spirit!”, I can testify that the spirit is working in my life showering me with blessings. This appears to be a radical concept to many, but not to me and Debra Taren, my fiancé. Since I was a kid, I have been drawn to people, the community, to debate about what is the greater good. I graduated with a degree in political science from UCLA, and fusing my musings into some of these songs is one of the great joys of my life and part of what I consider to be my personal ministry. I have always hated injustice and enjoy the thought of Zac de La Rocha of Rage Against the Machine and Public Enemy – can that infuse blues and blues rock? Listen to Blue Revolution – you be the judge!

**Chap:** Kindness, Joy, Love and Happiness! This says it all. (KJLH was the call tag for a black Los Angeles Radio station in the 70's that had a major impact on my life.)

**Let's take a trip with a time machine, so where and why would you really want to go for a whole day?**

**Bill:** A George Martin session. A summer day with my nuclear family. My wedding day with Debra.

**Chapman:** As long as I could come back and tell everyone... Heaven would be trip! Why?

## New Blues Revolution - Home



*(Photo by Rik Boose)*

<http://blues.gr/profiles/blogs/an-interview-with-bill-grisolia-chap-cooper-of-new-blues>