

Jimmie Vaughan
More Blues, Ballads and Favorites
Bio

For Jimmie Vaughan, too much of a good thing is a concept that simply doesn't exist. The legendary Texan guitar dynamo was so pleased with the response to his 2010 album *Blues, Ballads and Favorites* that he decided to follow it up with a brand new collection he's calling—what else?—*More Blues, Ballads and Favorites!* Packed with 16 covers of classic tunes that are close to his heart, the album—recorded, like the previous one, in his hometown of Austin, Texas—reunites Vaughan with the same cast of musicians that helped him out on the previous set. Also returning for round two, to assist with the vocals, is Lou Ann Barton, whose powerful pipes grace several tunes on the new release.

“The first album was a success,” says Vaughan, “and what happened is I never really stopped. Even after I turned the first one in I was still recording. I've decided that, as long as I feel like it, I'm going to do that from now on.”

Jimmie Vaughan—who first came to prominence as co-founder of the pioneering Texas blues-rock band the Fabulous Thunderbirds in the '70s—has certainly earned the right to do whatever he wants whenever he wants to do it. Since he was a kid, Vaughan has dedicated his life to mastering his axe and reminding folks what American music is all about—music, he says, that need not be categorized.

“When I talk about country and blues, they're the same thing,” he says. “Muddy Waters and Hank Williams, Webb Pierce and Jimmy Reed. When I was a kid I didn't understand the difference. Everybody was always asking me, ‘Why do you want to play blues? Why don't you play country?’ But I would listen to the country guys and they would be doing a Jimmy Reed song. They're playing the same lick. And Ray Charles, Little Milton, Guitar Junior, Lonnie Brooks, B.B. King—they all did country songs. Is Bob Wills country, blues or jazz? And the answer is, it's American music. And if you don't like it, kiss my ass! I'm tired of trying to pigeonhole everything. I want to bring it together; it comes from the same place.”

On the self-produced *More Blues, Ballads and Favorites*, bringing it all together is exactly what Jimmie Vaughan does. From the opening track, Pierce's “I Ain't Never,” to the closer, the Faye Adams rouser “Shake a Hand,” Vaughan and his like-minded pals keep things rockin' and rollin'. Highlights include “The Rains Came,” originally by the Texas Gulf Coast band Big Sambo and the House Wreckers and later reworked by the late, great Doug Sahm; two tracks by the recently deceased Bobby Charles, “No Use Knocking” and “I Ain't Gonna Do it No More”; two picked up from the semi-obscure New Orleans R&B singer Annie Laurie, “It's Been a Long Time” and “I'm In the Mood For You”; and great, often lost songs originally cut by Hank Williams (“I Hang My Head and Cry”), Jimmy Liggins (“Teardrop Blues”), Jivin' Gene (“Breaking Up Is Hard to Do”), Teddy Humphries (“What Makes You So Tough”), Ray Charles (“Greenback Dollar Bill”), Nappy Brown (“Cried Like a Baby”), Lloyd Price (“Oooh Oooh Oooh”), Jimmy Reed (“I Want to Love You”) and Amos Milburn (“Bad Bad Whiskey”).

If the repertoire sounds like a record collector's dream, that might be because Vaughan approached the recording sessions in much the same way that the original artists must have. “I pretend that I'm making 45s. I only make two or three at a time and I might say, ‘This song would be a good flip side.’ We go in the studio and work out the arrangement and then go for it. Sometimes something will happen that you didn't expect and you'll say, ‘Well, that's really cool. I couldn't have planned on that.’”

For Vaughan, even after more than four decades of playing the music he loves, it's all still something of a dream. "If you're a kid and you say 'I want to be a blues guitar player when I grow up,' there's a certain amount of pretending to get yourself to believe you can do anything like that," he says. "That's the way I look at the creative process. I just pretend that I'm doing it and kind of figure it out. I guess I've gotten a lot of experience along the way. But it really has as much to do with the dreaming as anything."

That dream began for Jimmie Vaughan during his childhood in Dallas. Listening to R&B and blues on the radio, seeing Elvis on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, watching his uncles pick country tunes on their guitars—all of those experiences helped shape the young Jimmie's musical interests. Then it happened. While home from school recuperating from a broken collarbone, "My dad's friend gave me a guitar and said, 'Play this,'" Vaughan remembers. "They were afraid I'd get in trouble around the house. It was an acoustic cowboy guitar with three strings. I learned a Jimmy Reed thing and I've been playing ever since. After about a week I knew this was what I wanted to do. I thought to myself, if I really practice I can get some money and get a car and I can split."

He got the car (he now collects them) and a bunch of guitars but Jimmie Vaughan never did leave Texas. He began playing around the Lone Star State with a series of bands, most notably the Chessmen, who opened once for a hotshot new guitarist named Jimi Hendrix. Then, in 1974, Vaughan hooked up with vocalist and harmonica player Kim Wilson and the Fabulous Thunderbirds were born. At first, Vaughan recalls, "People told us you can't do this. You can't have a blues band. Why do you want to do this? You're crazy." But the blues fanatics carried on regardless and, slowly but surely, proved the doubters wrong. In 1979 the band released their debut album and their fan base grew steadily from there. Even as rock music morphed around them—with trends such as punk and hip-hop making their grand arrivals—the Fab T-Birds, as they were affectionately known, stuck with the high-octane blues-rock formula that earned their music the tag "Blue Wave" in the media.

The T-Birds reached their peak of popularity with the 1986 release of *Tuff Enuff*, a classic of the genre that still sounds as monstrous today as it did a quarter-century ago. Jimmie stayed with the group another four years after that, and his first move following his exit from the group was to cut an album with his kid brother, not a bad little guitar picker himself: Stevie Ray Vaughan. *Family Style* was a huge hit upon its release in the fall of 1990, but its success came with a huge price tag: Stevie Ray's death in a helicopter crash just weeks after the album's completion. To this day, Jimmie can't wrap his head around the tragic event. "The whole thing doesn't seem like it happened. It still stings," he says, "but I'm proud of the record we did together."

It took Jimmie a few years to come to grips with Stevie Ray's untimely passing, and only then was he able to launch his own solo career in earnest. *Strange Pleasure* (1994), his debut under his own name, was produced by Nile Rodgers and included Dr. John among its cast of players, working out on a set mostly comprised of original Vaughan compositions. The same formula—with Rodgers and the Doctor once again on hand—was utilized for 1998's *Out There*, while *Do You Get the Blues?* (released, ironically, on September 11, 2001) found Vaughan more fully embracing the rootsy down-home Texas blues sound he grew up with. It took nine years before Jimmie Vaughan returned with a new album, but *Blues, Ballads and Favorites* was welcomed by his old fans and countless new ones—the album was nominated for Best Traditional Blues Album at this year's Grammy awards.

Vaughan is proud, of course, but he's not in it to be patted on the back—just as it was when he first picked up that cowboy guitar, he plays music because there's nothing he loves more. "These songs just speak to me," he says. "Sometimes the ones you think you can't do, you can do, and the ones you think you can do, you can't. The only way to find out is to try. But if you saw how

easy it was for us to do these songs on this album, you would be amazed. I'd listen to a song for a couple of days in my truck and just take it to the band and say, 'I'd like to do this.' We would just do it and sometimes it would be done after the first or second or third take. We didn't spend a lot of time in the studio."

Of course, much of the credit goes to the band, and Vaughan reserves special kudos for Barton. "I go back with Lou Ann before the Thunderbirds," he says. "When we met she was 18 and sang a Little Richard medley and I never recovered. She was wild. She's just got a lot of feeling and we like the same kind of stuff."

Following the release of *More Blues, Ballads and Favorites*, Vaughan and band will once again hit the road. In the meantime, fans who own an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch can check out TouchChords Jimmie Vaughan, a free app by the Curious Brain company that allows the user to improve his or her blues soloing skills via the songs on the first volume of *Blues, Ballads and Favorites*.

"I just love this band and it's really fun to play with them because we really swing," says Vaughan in summation. "That makes the soloing interesting and fun. It's like jumping on a merry-go-round and riding it. I'm gonna keep recording as songs come up. I've got a good little studio in town that I like. We can have a rehearsal and go in the studio and knock a couple of them out. I just pretend that I'm a kid. I still enjoy the music. That's what it's all about for me."

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