

History of The Outlaw Blues Band

Liner Notes by **John O'Regan** for BGO Records, July 2011.

'The musical sounds are in the roots of the blues: One of the only original American music, naked and pure.'

California's Outlaw Blues Band was signed to ABC's Bluesway label by renowned producer **Bob Thiele**.

Thiele had an impressive reputation as a Jazz producer, heading up the Impulse label. Amongst his production credits are B.B. King, John Coltrane and John Lee Hooker.

The band recorded two diverse and musically outstanding albums in 1968-1969 before splitting up.

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The late 1960s was a period of experimentation musically, culturally and socially. In America, bands mixing rhythm sections with brass instruments to experiment and produce a music that was new, exciting, radical and crossed boundaries was the norm rather than the extreme. Santana and The Electric Flag for example set the pace with line ups of mixed ethnicity and musical prowess freely mixing Latin, Jazz, Blues and Rock. Jazz band leaders like Don Ellis and Buddy Rich were investigating rock styled arrangements and even the legendary bluesmen like Muddy Waters are beginning to experiment with adding brass sections to his upfront blues.

Emerging from Los Angeles in the same time frame, The Outlaw Blues Band recorded two influential albums for ABC Bluesway Records in 1968 "The Outlaw Blues Band and the People" and "Breaking In" released in 1969 which were destined for obscurity initially. While they retained some underground appeal, their rediscovery decades later by Cypress Hill, and De La Soul's sampling of the atmospheric jazz tinged instrumental "Deep Gully" alerted a whole new audience to the Outlaw Blues Band's music. Cypress Hill sampled "Deep Gully" as performed by The Outlaw Blues Band in their track "When The Shit Goes Down" featured in the 2007 movie "Freedom Writers" starring Hilary Swank and Patrick Dempsey, and it was also sampled by De la Soul in "Buhloone Mindstate Intro" and it also emerged on Akinyele's "Dear

Diary”. Suddenly this obscure Californian Blues /Rock/Jazz outfit became heroes to a generation weaned on urban R n B beats and streetwise rap rhymes. The Outlaw Blues Band while based in Los Angeles offered a unique cultural crossover, its membership included musicians of United States, Nicaragua, El Salvador and English origin. Their instrumental lineup included sax, flute and vibraharp as well as the standard rhythm section and their music freely mixed Jazz based improvisation, blues pulsing’s and rock excitement.

The Outlaw Blues Band’s mix of Rock, Jazz, Latin and Psychedelic nuances mixed chilled out coolness with a vibrant sensuality and earthy musical excitement.

“The Outlaw Blues Band and The People” and “Breaking In” should have been as commercially successful as they are influential. However while they languished in cult appeal for decades, Cyprus Hill and De La Soul both took notice and sampled The Outlaw Blues Band’s music into their own recordings. The Outlaw Blues Band was, without a doubt, one of the most important blues-rock groups of the late '60s to early '70s on par with Canned Heat, and The Paul Butterfield Blues Band. Their rediscovery is probably one of the most heartening stories of an American rock/blues/jazz crossover band for whom fusion was as natural as breathing. It’s heartening to report that their music captured on “The Outlaw Blues Band and The People” and “Breaking In” still breathes as freshly in 2011 as it did when first committed to vinyl. The Outlaw Blues Band is an undiscovered American musical institution finally awarded its due recognition.

In conclusion, **Victor Aleman** founder and director of the musical group reflects on the achievements of The Outlaw Blues Band, “I believe that the band - taking in consideration all the good deeds and obstacles in the course of the group - were blessed and lucky to have done what we did with the little resources and guidance that we had in our path. Starting with each member of the group with very different backgrounds, some of us with a different culture and language; different upbringings and different taste of music, but in the end, we were together playing and growing musically in a place and period of life that historically was very progressive politically, artistically and musically.

We played with intensive passion to the maximum on whatever composition we performed, every time doing the best we could. Always growing to new levels and looking for new musical horizons. We were very fortunate to have worked with one of the best and most important producers ever in the music

business, Bob Thiele, and to have had recorded two albums that were released on a major label.

The only regret that I have now is that we were not able to record the amount of different music that the Outlaw Blues Band played and had at that time, but *C'est la vie*.

Now I still have the objective to keep rising, living a harmonious meaningful life and to be continuously musical.”

Note by © **John O'Regan** July 2011 for BGO Records.

Produced by **BOB THIELE**

Directed and arranged by the **OUTLAW BLUES BAND**

Personnel:

VICTOR ALEMAN drums, percussion

JOE WHITEMAN sax, flute, vibraphone

JOE FRANCIS GONZALES bass

PHILLIP JOHN lead guitar, vocals

LEON RUBENHOLD harmonica

LAWRENCE 'SLIM' DICKENS bass

JIMMY 'PANCHITO' COLFORD congas

LARRY GENTILE organ

BOB LEVEY drums

BENNY VENEGAS organ

These albums were originally recorded at United and Western Studios in Hollywood, California, in 1967-68 for ABC Bluesway Records.

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