

THE MUSIC MAKER RAG

Official Newsletter of the Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc.

VOLUME ONE, NUMBER ONE,
Autumn 1995



MISSION STATEMENT

Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded by audio pioneer Mark Levinson and musician/folklorist Timothy Duffy in April 1994, and is dedicated to helping forgotten blues and folk musicians living in the South. Now in their 70s and 80s, these artists represent the end of an era. Sadly, many are suffering from extreme poverty and need food, shelter, medical care, and other assistance. All funds donated to the Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. go directly to these artists in need, in the form of cash or in-kind grants.

In 1995, Mark Levinson established Music Maker Recordings to make the finest CDs of the world's great jazz, blues and classical artists. Through this vehicle, many of the musicians assisted by the foundation can be recorded with the best sonic quality and have deals arranged with CD, LD, and TV companies to provide long-term income. A percentage of all profits generated from sales of Music Maker Recordings is channeled back into the Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc.

The Music Maker Rag is published by
Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 567 Pineville, NC 27043
Tel (910) 325-3261 Fax (910) 325-3263
© 1995 Timothy Duffy. All Rights Reserved.



Society Hill, Alabama, March 1995

photo: Tim Duffy

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

As we take stock of our first eighteen months of operation, we see both behind and before us a very busy, productive and exciting time for Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. We have clocked over 10,000 miles out in the field and recorded at least 25 artists between Beaufort, North Carolina and Greasy Corner, Arkansas. It seems that we have rolled as many miles of tape as we have put on the van during our countless sojourns across the South these past months. There are indeed some bright lights still shining out there, as evidenced in rural Georgia in the likes of guitarist John Lee Zeigler and singer/harmonica player Rufus McKenzie; as well as in downtown Ozark, Alabama in the living room of J.W. Warren - so name a few.

These visits, as they were often unsolicited, were not without obstacles. We were constantly greeted with suspicious eyes as we emerged from our van and proceeded to knock on the door of an artist we hoped to meet. On one occasion, Timothy carried on an hour long conversation through a barely-cracked door before the artist would agree to set up a meeting. Sometimes the artists would postpone getting together with us for a day or more, speculating that we wouldn't stay around town that long. When we were fortunate to be granted interviews, we usually met in the artists' homes. The first moments were awkward; we were again met with suspicion, as they found it hard to believe that folks out there are interested in their music and really want to help them. Sharing stories from our travels with Guitar Gabriel and the successes of other Music Maker artists helped to convey our sincerity. Once trust was established, the magic would start to ooze through their words and music and there was no stopping!

During this first year we managed to assist 25 traditional artists with grants of cash or in-kind. Music Maker has purchased everything from dentures to CD players for various artists and supplied much-needed cash to buy heating oil, groceries and cover medical bills. In response to a call to arms from Guitar Player and Guitar Shop magazines, we received two donations of guitars. The recipients were J.W. Warren (who can be heard on *Come So Far*) and Jimmie Lee Williams of Sylvester, GA. Both of these artists were extremely pleased with the gifts as they had been without instruments to practice on for years.

From providing routine transportation to those who cannot drive to procuring passports for individuals wishing to perform at European music festivals (no easy task considering many of these artists do not have birth certificates), Music Maker has attempted to act as an ever-present friend to the artists we have had the privilege to get to know. We will continue our regular visits to our friends in the local rest homes and neighborhoods, as well as stay in close contact by phone or mail with those who live further away. Quarterly road trips have been planned so that we may revisit folks out-of-state, in addition to our ongoing attempts to locate other artists throughout the South.

The Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. will continue to provide services whenever possible, creating, of course, a constant financial need. But as we have discovered first-hand in the field, these folks truly thrive on communication. We encourage you to contact them and share your thoughts (and music). What light a simple postcard sheds on the day of an elderly person - it's a guaranteed feel-good for everyone, so don't be shy! [Correspondences may be sent c/o Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc.]

We are excited and greatly encouraged by the interest and support that has thus far been shown and received for this project and we are optimistic about the future. If you have any comments or ideas to share or would like to become involved in what the foundation is doing, please do not hesitate to call or write. Thank you all for caring and please be in touch.

Yours Truly,

Denise & Timothy Duffy



Denise & Timothy Duffy, Sylvester, Ga.
photo: Tim Duffy

ARTIST NOTES

- ...John Lee Zeigler performed this July at the First Annual Thomas Dorsey Gospel Music Festival.
- ...John Lee Zeigler and J.W. Warren have been invited to perform at the prestigious Blues Estalette in Utrecht, Holland this November.
- ...John Dee Holeman and Mr. Q (Cusell Seale) performed to ecstatic crowds at Blues to Bop, a festival in Lugano, Switzerland in August, 1995.
- ...Willa Mae Buckner of Winston-Salem, North Carolina has made a stellar recovery from the broken hip she suffered last summer. After four weeks in the hospital and three months at the convalescent hospital she is back home, has a new puppy and is performing more strongly than ever. She's become a real show stealer these days in area performances and was the subject of a film school documentary project this spring and a video by Gail Welker.
- ...Bishop and Marie Manning and Elder Anderson Johnson have recently been visited and filmed by the BBC for a documentary of Gospel music in the U.S.
- ...Big Boy Henry is recovering from heart-surgery and was recently honored with a North Carolina Folk Heritage Award.
- ...Guitar Gabriel lost his wife of 20 years in October of 1993 and then went on to do some of the most extensive touring he has done in years. He traveled up and down the eastern seaboard, as well as performing at prestigious festivals in Canada, Iowa, Switzerland, Belgium, France, and Carnegie Hall. He also made two trips up to Connecticut where we recorded his new CD. Gabe is doing well and was recently invited to Centrum's Blues Week in Port Townsend, Washington. Gabriel was a smash success and brought the house down when he joined 83-year-old Pinetop Perkins to close out the festival.
- ...Pernell King at the time of our first recording was homeless but now has his own apartment and telephone.
- ...Lucille Lindsey lost her left leg through diabetes yet is still up for recording sessions with her brother Guitar Gabriel.



Timothy Duffy, Guitar Gabriel & Captain Luke

photo: Marcus Krause

...Macavine Hayes is doing very well. He has planted a big garden and is anxious to get out on the road to perform.

...Captain Luke is doing well and has some new songs ready to record.

...Samuel Turner Stevens is very involved in his seniors community and recently won the Seniors State Championship Pool Tournament.

...There are many other artists we are working with and we hope to surprise you with their talents in some upcoming releases.

MUSIC MAKER NEWS

...Mark Levinson has made a special arrangement with Tower Records in the New York metropolitan area. 10 Tower Records stores will carry Music Maker Recordings. This should be happening in the beginning of October.

...This spring Timothy Duffy was visited by the German blues researcher/photographer Axel Kutzner for six weeks. Axel shared his 25 years of field-work quite freely with Duffy and the result was meeting and recording a great deal of wonderful blues artists throughout Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama. Axel is a gifted and perceptive photographer and the donation of his talents and knowledge to Music Maker is greatly appreciated. He left a number of photographs with the foundation to help raise money for the artists he has documented. Over 50 of Kutzner's and Duffy's photographs will be on exhibit at Callo's New York showroom.



Willa Mae Buckner

Timothy Duffy: His playing with the artists on the new recordings is truly a testament to his imaginative musicianship. In the fall of '95, Michael moved to Austin, Texas and established Psychodelic Cowboy Music, Inc. and self produced his own CD entitled, "Automobility." Contact: (212) 989-5098.

...This year, Timothy and Denise Duffy hosted the first annual Music Maker Labor Day picnic. It was a gorgeous day. Food was shared and everyone enjoyed the music of Mr. Q, Macavine Hayes, Willa Mae Buckner, Guitar Gabriel and Captain Luke.

...Artist/photographer Brian Golden, whose work appears throughout our CDs, is designing a blues web page. Look for it on the internet soon. He may be reached at his studio in High Point, NC. Contact: (910) 586-3438.

...Please note our new name. At our inception we were named Music Maker Relief and Recording Foundation, Inc. This has been changed to Music Maker Relief Foundation Inc. This has been done to make a clear distinction between the Foundation and Music Maker Recordings. This way the Relief Foundation can make contributions directly to the artists themselves without bearing the cost for the recording projects.

...Living the Blues Cruise hosted by Consumer Travel Network/Theme Quest International are new sponsors of Music Maker Relief and Recording Foundation, Inc. In conjunction with radio station WLOQ in Orlando, Florida, their show "Smokestack Lightning" has recently featured a two-hour special of our three CDs, to help raise money for the foundation. Their first cruise is in September and they have two cruises scheduled in 1996 in which they plan to feature Music Maker artists. For Blues Cruise information call (800) 788-4544.

...Evan Wilson, director of the Thomas A. Dorsey Gospel Music Festival in Villa Rica, Georgia, has committed to feature Music Maker artists from Georgia in his festival and other events.

...Timothy Duffy was the subject of a feature article in Zasski, a magazine about American Culture for Japanese Americans written in both English and Japanese. This is a new publication by Steve Saunders who is also is editor of High Performance Review.

...Cree McCree, a music writer from New York City, has written an article on Music Maker Relief and Recording Foundation, Inc. which will be featured in the music magazine Huh, a Time-Warner publication.

...In the fall of '94, musician Michael Parrish moved to North Carolina to play piano with Guitar Gabriel and

MUSIC MAKER RECORDINGS

Music Maker Recordings is proud to announce the release of its first two CDs, *Guitar Gabriel Vol. 1* and *Came So Far*. Prior to release in stores we are offering the first production run to supporters of Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc., by mail.



Guitar Gabriel, Vol. 1 MMCD 0494

Here Comes the Devil! Blues for Dorothy! Old Man Rivers! You Got to Watch Yourself! Old Fashioned Love! Leave My Goat Alone! Let's Talk it Over! Dr. Buzzard! Let it Roll! Here Comes Grandma! Hospital Blues! Back in the Western Days! Two Brothers

Guitar Gabriel, Volume 1 is a testament to the singular artistry of this musician. His skill on guitar, and more importantly, his mastery as a lyricist and singer, clearly qualifies Gabriel as the most original blues musician on the scene today. What is remarkably striking is Gabriel's amazing facility with words—a skill that lies at the very heart of the blues' meaning within the African American community.

In this CD Gabriel is accompanied by gifted musicians who sympathetically provide back-up with flugel-horn, bass, drums, guitar and piano. Gabriel breaks new ground in his country-blues idiom with infectious jazz-tinged rhythms and melodies. This new material spans the entire spectrum of his repertoire, touching on raunchy toasts, story songs and deep blues.

Review

In a move that may upset blues purists, the new *Guitar Gabriel Volume 1* ventures well beyond the drink houses into his own private Bedford, an improvisatory crossroads where the starkly pre-modern meets the startlingly postmodern and the Devil's "got his hair tied up in a ponytail" to keep all the drunks confused." And this is as it should be. The blues isn't a museum piece to be preserved in formaldehyde; it's an ongoing dialogue of dynamic tensions in which changes are resolved inside a tradition that loops back to Africa—and loops forward into everything from Sun Ra's intergalactic explorations to PJ. Harvey's innerspace excursions.

-Cree McCree
Hulk Magazine



Came So Far MMCD 1294

Marie Manning: Hard Luck and Trouble. Bishop Manning: Gospel Train. Captain Luke: Rainsy Night in Georgia. I Don't Want No Woman. John Lee Zeigler: Going Away. J.W. Warren: Have You Seen Corinna!. Looking for My Woman. Rufus McKenzie: Whooping the Blues. Maxine Hayes: Sweet Little Angel. Goodbye Johnny B. Goode. Lucille Lindsey and Guitar Gabriel: Fly Around Heaven All Day, Trying to Make 100. Samuel Turner Stevens: Marching Through Georgia, T for Texas. Bishop Manning: Questionnaire Blues. Big Boy Henry-Volvevina. Parnell King and Guitar Gabriel: Late in the Evening. Guitar Gabriel: Key to the Highway.

Came So Far presents eighteen selections by twelve astonishing blues and gospel artists. Many of these artists have never before been recorded. Their talents have grown in obscurity. Representing older styles that have been forgotten or were thought to have vanished, this music shows the roots of modern Blues, R&B, Soul and much of the Pop music on the market today. The vast majority of the originators of the blues died in the 40s, 50s and 60s, but thankfully the artists found here have lived to record in high fidelity and to hopefully receive some long-overdue benefits and appreciation.

Review

"*Came So Far*" features cuts by Bishop Dredy and Marie Manning, John Lee Zeigler, J.W. Warren, Rufus McKenzie, and Parnell King amongst others. The sonic quality of these recordings is excellent as is the presentation. This is, in my opinion, a very worthwhile venture and is to be both applauded and supported by everyone interested in the more traditional forms of the blues.

-Mike Vernon
for and on behalf of
Code Blue
East West/Atlantic Records



A Living Past, Music Maker Patron's Sampler 9401

Guitar Gabriel: I Came So Far, Expressing the Blues. Preston Fulp: Careless Love, Farther Along. Captain Luke: Angels of Mercy. Big Boy Henry: Hot Shot Momma. Wills Mae Buckner: Peter Rumpkin, Yo-Yo. Macavine Hayes: Let's Talk it Over, I Got A Woman. Samuel Turner Stevens: Railroadin' and Gamblin'. Guitar Gabriel and Lucille Lindsey: Do You Know What it Means to Have a Friend? Captain Luke: Freight Train Boogie, Kingfish Story, Dog and Cat Fight. Guitar Gabriel: A Living Past.

The Patron's Sampler CD consists of 17 great performances by artists whose names you haven't heard before, and whose music and stories you'll never forget. The accompanying book contains beautiful photographs of the artists, complete lyrics, and information about the artists, their histories and the story behind the recordings. All of these recordings have been mastered on Cello equipment, and this type of music has never been heard before at this level of audio excellence! Rest assured, you've never heard anything like it. With your contribution, Music Maker will assist these musicians to get the recognition they deserve and preserve music we need and cherish.

Reviews

-And talk about the absolute sound: you can taste the liquor and sex, smell the dusty roadhouse wood and rural air, touch cheap guitars and out-of-tune upright pianos.

-Wayne Garcia,
Absolute Sound
"The Three Best Sounding
CDs of All Time"

-The performances are all wonderful-sometimes weird, sometimes raunchy, sometimes moving, but truly wonderful.

-The Audiophile Voice

To Order these CDs:

A Living Past \$100

A large format booklet and CD comes with a contribution of \$100 to Music Maker Relief and Recording Foundation, Inc.

Guitar Gabriel, Volume 1

and **Came So Far** cost \$20 per disc.

Please add \$7 for postage and handling.

Make checks or L.M.O.'s to:

Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc.

Sold to: Music Maker

P.O. Box 567

Thomas, NC 27043

-It's full of roots blues, which makes my hair stand straight and fills my eyes with tears.

-Uwe Kirtach,
Akustische

-An elegant rural passport to a rapidly vanishing era.

-Jan Obrecht,
Guitar Player

-One of the best compact discs of rural blues we've heard recently is called A Living Past.

-Blues Access

-The sound quality is exquisite, Guitar Gabriel plays powerful deep blues, his vocals charged with emotion. This is a superb sampler of the traditional blues scene in North Carolina.

-David Nelson,
Living Blues

-If you appreciate good authentic country blues music, you'll probably want your own copy of Music Makers Patron's Sampler CD.

-The Robb Report

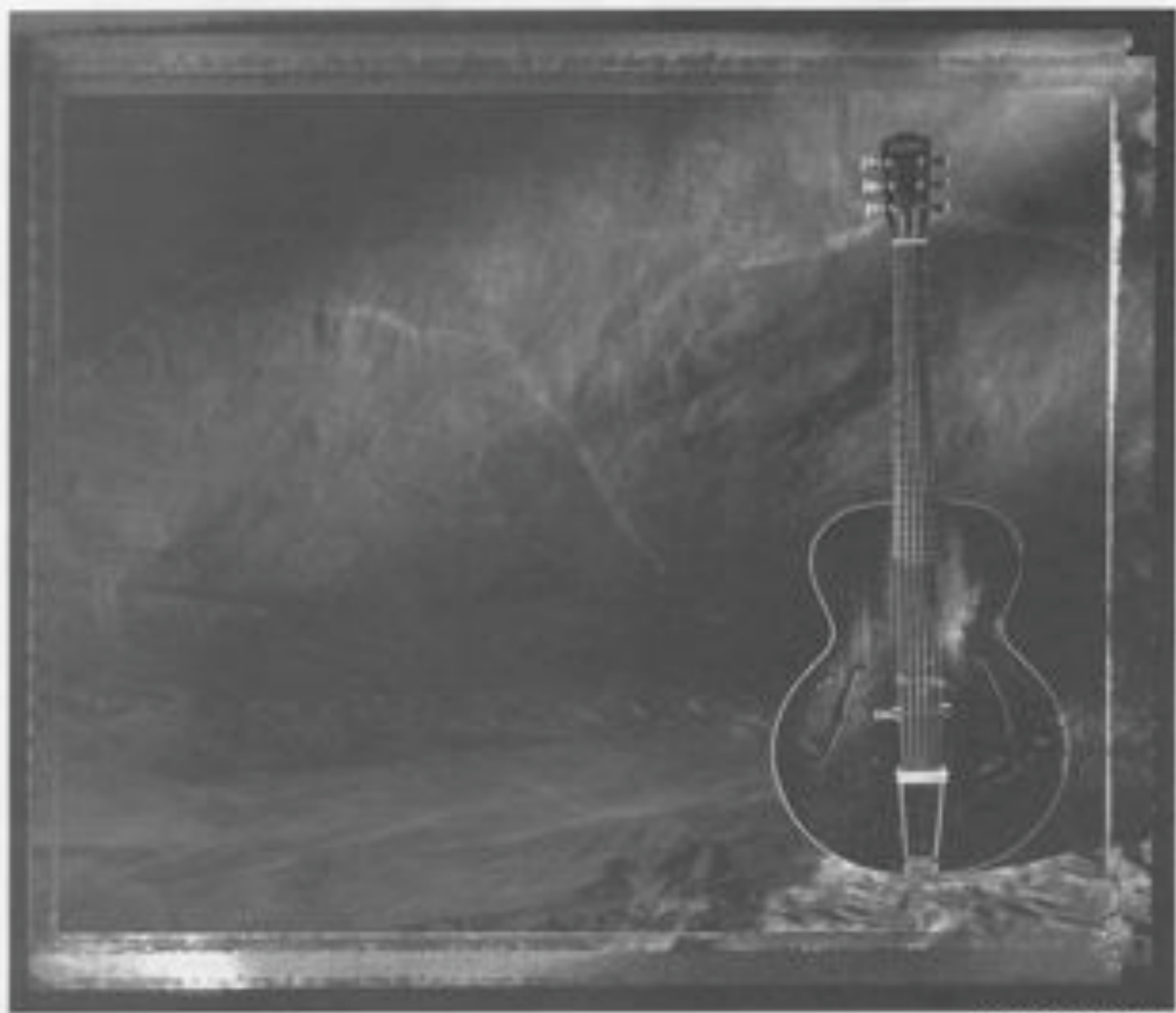


photo: Brian Golden