Dear Friends,

We send our greetings and best wishes to everyone in this New Year. As our fiscal year does not end until March we are on the last leg of our first annual fund drive.

In September we began our $100,000 Lucado Challenge Gift campaign. You will soon be receiving more information about this gift. We wish to thank everyone who has participated thus far and we urge you all to respond to the generosity of our angel from Gray, Georgia. In December, Bill presented us with a check for $50,000. With your help we plan on matching this entire gift in the next few months.

On top of his challenge gift, Mr. Lucado granted us the money to help produce four important new Music Maker Recordings by Captain Luke & Cool John, Carl Rutherford, Eddie Tigner and Essie Mae Brooks.

Each one of these artists has used this opportunity to forge their own special place in our musical universe: Captain Luke & Cool John by creating a new genre; Essie Mae Brooks by hitting us with 12 original sacred songs exploring universal truths; Eddie Tigner through showing us a good time with familiar standards; and Carl Rutherford by making the best roots country record to come along in decades. These are among the finest recordings that will be issued this year.

We are proud to feature Carl Rutherford in this issue. Peter Cooper courageously traveled to Pinnacle last January to meet Carl and upon our request this fall he wrote this essay.

Each one of the artists we serve has a life as compelling as Carl's. With your support we will continue with our work to capture their best musical moments when we can and help these great pioneers get along just a little bit easier.

If any of you wish to contact us, please feel welcome to call or email us to learn more.

With warm regards,

Timothy & Denise Duffy

www.musicmaker.org
The Last Session

It's a gray world and no yellow line, snow falling harder now. The road to Mayberry is slick and mean. It's really Winston-Salem records in the rear view. There is no Mayberry, of course. But it is really Pilot Mountain, and you can see it from the exit to Pinnacle, North Carolina. On a clear day, that is, you can see it. This is not a clear day.

The slow ride leads to a steep drive, and there at the top is Carl Rutherford's van, caked in ice, cold clothes sworn all over the interior. Next to the van is a cabin, and inside the cabin are three men, two with guitars and one without.

Carl Rutherford is sitting on a chair, holding one of the guitars. He's wearing a pair of Flannel underwear quilted polyester just now he reaches under his chair, picking up a bottle of medicine in search of something he says is a nebulous coughing. A nebulous coughing in a nebulous environment.

"It's breathin' treatment," says he, "Gasw some of that shit out of my lungs."

That's the shit that he says is going to kill him, and he figures it'll happen before two long. This is Carl Rutherford's last recording session, so far as he can tell. He's moving to California so be with his daughter moving to California to get out of the cold. And to die.

Carl used to live in California, but he's from West Virginia. He pronounces some words sort of like the old Acoustic, even though he's from Kentucky. "War in West Virginia," you know. He knows about coal mining, and about working miners. He knows about how to praise God, and he knows about things that happen in a coal mining town. Some days there are no mines, and the power plant where the coal is burned is quiet. Other times there are fires and smoke and the power plant is noisy.

"War in West Virginia," he says, "is a quiet place. You can't do anything with that kind, you're going to have trouble. They're little spike hills. Stick up like spikes."

He has all these songs. Carl does. Hank Williams would be proud of some of these songs. "Love Can't Fly On Broken Wings." Hank would like that one. "Flyin' High, Walkin' Tall," too.

Then there are the ones about the mines. "You've got to turn off the fear, when you come down into here," he sings, and that's when he knows you're not off. Carl Rutherford saw bad things happen down there. "A man's life isn't nothing when he gives it all." That's his War he's talking about. "You gotta pray that the dear Lord is holding you near." That's for real, from a man who went to a week of funerals after a catastrophic mining accident. After that, the coal mine.com puts on an old machine, playing old music. The man's name is "War in West Virginia," you know. He's a coal miner. He's a man who's been through a lot. He's a man who knows what it's like. He's a man who understands the world.

"If you don't go now, you'll probably never go again," he said. "We'll just bring a strip of land, so we said, 'I need to stay and help pay off that debt.' I made $16 a day. When I got the money saved, I went. I went to California."

These songs, this life - lived mostly in West Virginia and California, in coal and in silver and in music - are swirling around inside the mind like the snow swirls outside of it. Warmer than the cold is cold. John Rutherford is next to one wall, listening to Carl, smiling sometimes, playing along. Ferguson is on the other wall. "I don't believe I've ever heard anybody any better than this fellow," Carl says. "God, he's so good." Taj Mahal says the same sort of stuff about Ferguson. Carl doesn't know much about Taj Mahal.

"I was at a state gathering in West Virginia, and somebody said, 'Carl, make a blues tape,'" he remembers. "I said, 'What's blues?' They said, 'Carl, you are blues.' I said, 'Okay, then I can do that.'"

Not so much done go done today. The bass player shows up, then leaves, scared that the snow will stop him from getting to Asheville in time for a paying gig. "All the rest of 'em were panicking with that snow," Carl says later. "I don't mind the snow. It's the accumulation that gets me." That's a saying of Carl's.

Little songs of brilliance, marred by out-of-tune guitar. Recording glitches. Harsh songs that can't sing loud enough. That's what happens today. But the little songs are something else, man. Something else.

The whole country's tuning up to see the Rams beat the Titans in the Super Bowl on Sunday and the real show is in these snowy hills, north of the Super Bowl, east of War. It's just a damned old cabin, but the little songs are something else.

That's not what's on Carl's record, though. That's all unofficial.

The record is for the good stuff. It's not the Last Session (which may in fact be the last session, good Lord willing). Just the one before it. Recorded in the same place. The same people were there before, except for Abe. Abe is the great Abrahan Reid, the skinny, bad-ass harp player who got in a horrid car crash-up between playing on this record and playing on the Last Session.

"Abe got hurt real bad," says he. "He played great, and then he got hurt." Country music is full of that. "That's why we're here," says Carl. "Abe's a blue man, though, and he's probably going to roll like Gardner never did. The blues is a hard life, but it's a resilient one. Capped and prayerful, that's what most musicians are. The prayers are softer than the blues.

Ferguson is all over Carl's album. Listen to what they played together: "I'll cry to the old rugged cross," Carl sang. "You could hear" Carl breathe when he's not singing. Carl breaks the record set norms on top of these little pyramids of vibrato, little stepping stones to something once out of reach. "I'll cry to the old rugged cross," Carl sang, and that feeling's for real. "And I'll exchange it willingly for a crown." That's hope and belief, which is all we've got, unless you count this life.

True life hillbilly blues and mountain gospel. Little strands of California honky-tonk.

" Ain't no thing! One pass," Carl said after he and Ferguson finished up with one of these. One pass, that's all.

Ferguson got it all. Carl sang "Long Black Livin'" and Ferguson dropped a little piece of "Green, Green Grass of Home." That's understanding:

If you want to know who Carl Rutherford is, you can listen to Carl's album. If you want to know where he's been, what he's done, you're going to have to ask around West Virginia and California and Tennessee and all the other places where he's been. You're going to have to ask around about the people to feel and act differently that they did before.

Carl, you see, is somebody entirely different. He's steeped in folklore, in mystery, in coal dust and rallies and jukeboxes.

He thinks he knows the deal with "In the Pines." He knows about the fellow who wrote it.

"My dad knew all that, from where he grew up," he said. "It's about what they call The Pines, outside of Caryville, Tennessee. Out from Knoxville. 'In the Pines' was two dead mates. It's a gorgeous thing, and they got to go after it. They worked on a second song. There was a wicket down the line somewhere, and the green's running way late. Real long suck. She was going to the poor office, and didn't know the train was running late. He was waiting for her and it didn't do any good. It hit her.

"Then he went crazy. Went off into the caves there that they called The Pines. About two years later, somebody found his bones in the cave. The poems he wrote were beside of him. There was a medicine man comes through that picked the bones and sold the black drog. Somebody gave him the poems, the words, and the set the melody to it."

Carl sang better in the shadow of Pilot Mountain than he'd sung in years. The reflex was under control ("I found a doctor in West Virginia who knew how to control that stuff. I was sounding a lot like Louis Armstrong before that.

His supporting cast was up to the task at hand, and the task at hand was getting Carl's songs down right.

That meant creating the soundtrack to a real American life. These coal-mining songs are a lot like these love songs. Shit, love is coal mining. Bad loves, at least. Crushed down into a dark, fearful place, breathing in the shit that's going to kill you. Good love is different, but it's harder to happen upon. And none of it means if the life is for real. That's where the singing comes in.

"One time I was listening to me, and I almost heard a preacher, you know?" Carl said. "I almost heard a preacher singing."

Peter Cooper, Nashville, Tennessee
Artists Notes

New recipient Clyde Langford from East Texas tells us, "The blues came out of nowhere, it just got picked up. It's solid and it's not solid. It kind of created itself. It kind of accumulated. Blues has no end. It has a meaning if you can figure out what the meaning is. Once you figured out the meaning, it's something you can't explain. It's like trying to reach out and catch air. It's there. We know it's there. But where is it? We can't catch it and hold it." Clyde was a recipient of our Instrument Acquisition Program in 2000.

Jerry McCain wrote in: It's cold out here, raining and wet. Let the gas bill come in, cause I'm all set. The bankruptcy deal with Celilo was a real heart breaker. But I'm going to pull through with help from the Music Makers.

Captain Luke & Cool John and Cootie Stark gave a command performance at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Christmas party sponsored by Bill Lucado's Southern Land and Lumber Company. Derek Trucks and Susan Tadeschi had fun playing with Cool John. Special thanks to Robert Kirk for traveling with us and playing drums.

Sonny Simmons was a recent recipient of our Emergency Relief Program. We wish him well on his trip back to Paris, France.


Neal Patzeman, Cool John, Ferguson, Mudcat, Cootie Stark, Tim Duffy, Hansel Creach and Janet Daniel all performed at the Lucerne Blues Festival in Switzerland last November. We applaud directors Fritz Jakober and Guido Schmid for featuring so many authentic blues artists.

Cootie Stark, Greenville, SC © Mark Austin

Cootie Stark has attracted the attention of two fine filmmakers. Deb Mach completed a very nice 4-minute piece on the man and Seth Riddle is in the midst of shooting an ambitious documentary film.

R&B singer Robert Lester of Chicago, IL, is a new recipient and has received support from our Emergency Relief Program.

Precious Bryant of Waverly Hall, GA, has received a grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts Apprenticeship Program to teach Jake Fussell & her grandson guitar.

Etta Baker of Morganton, NC is 88 and still works in her yard and practices guitar every day.

Essie Mae Brooks, a recipient of our Visiting Artist Program, is looking forward to traveling and to promoting her new CD.

Drink Small has a new manager by the name of Kathy Fox: 803-776-2518.

J.W. Warren of Elba, AL is recovering from a heart attack.

Cootie Stark has been writing some incredible new songs. He is planning on recording them soon and coming out with a new record.

Willie King has been featured in Living Blues and Juke Blues and his new release on Rooster Records has been well received.
Life Maintenance - Provides grants for food, medical needs, housing, transportation, and other life necessities.

Instrument Acquisition - Provides quality instruments and maintenance funds to recipient musicians.

Tour Support - Provides funding and services to musicians wishing to tour and record.

Emergency Relief - Makes substantial grants to recipients in crisis due to health issues, fire, theft, etc.

Visiting Artist Program - Brings artists to our base in Pinnacle, North Carolina to evaluate their needs and help them determine the best means of preserving and sharing their music. This program enables us to continue locating new artists and to provide grants and services for documentation through media (audio, video, still photography, web-streaming etc.), travel and lodging, and performance opportunities.

Review

First reaction to Outsider Lounge Music can involve shock, gape-mouthed shock. Here is a virtual unknown, Captain Luke, singing in a basso-profundio voice that conjures the smooth growl of Barry White and the immediacy of Al Green, the deep blues soul of Rev. Gary Davis and the assuredness of Dean Martin. Luke’s more than 70 years of hard experience underpin interpretations of ‘Chokin’ Kind, Rainy Night in Georgia, It’s Just a Matter of Time and other leveler classics. “Every note he sings is a hot chocolate one,” said blues legend Taj Mahal.

Luke’s only accompaniment comes from Cool John Ferguson, a left-handed guitarist that Mahal calls “one of the five greatest guitar players I’ve ever heard.” Ferguson plays airy jazz and deep blues, even working in some country pickin’ on Luke’s self-penned “Old Black Buck.” The recording is audiophile quality, and the musicianship is phenomenal.

- Peter Cooper & Craig Hightower, The Nashville Tennessean
- Record Round-Up the Best of 2000
Music Maker News

Rachel Shebott, our program coordinator for over two years, has left her position at MMRF to pursue a career in website management. Her incredible loyalty and support to the artists and our cause will never be matched. Rachel continues to help us with our website, and messages to her can be directed to our address.

Soulurium record executive Matt Thorn asked Tim to produce an album of singer/songwriter Matt Harding. This project was recorded in Pavilion and features many MM artists. Order this CD from the donation page.

Eneas Thompson of AP wrote, "The atmosphere at the foundations five-room farmhouse is like a hip welfare agency fund-raising campaign, and jam session wrapped together." This article found its way into newspapers throughout the country.

Kim Tamalonis created a masterpiece with the Captain Luke and Cool John, Outsider Lounge Music album artwork and design and Eddie Tigner’s Route 46 album cover.

Congratulations to Steve Riggins who won the auction of an Epiphone guitar signed by Taj Mahal on All-Star Charity.com. Signed items by Bonnie Rain also helped raise funds for MMRF.

We salute Matthew Chibert, Neal Alpert, Pete Brown, David Stoltz, and Rio Steila for donating fine guitars to MMRF.

Cool John Ferguson is working on his upcoming release for Cross Cut Records.

Blues guitarist, friend of Skip James and MMRF Bill Barth died in his sleep at the age of 57 last July 15.

We celebrated the New Year with Captain Luke & Cool John, Cootie Stark, Whodlin’ Bitches, Macavine Hayes, and many of our friends from around the country at MMRF headquarters.

Artist Feature

Gable Perronin was born on August 17, 1937, near Opelousas, Louisiana. He began to play guitar when he was 16 and was heavily influenced by Guitar Slim and B.B. King. In 1956 at J.D. Miller’s studio he recorded the hit "Congo Mambo" and became Guitar Gable, his band was the Musical Kings. Gable went on to record several titles for the Excello label including "Irene", "Guitar Rhumba" and "This Should Go On Forever". Gable’s band was playing to packed audiences throughout South Louisiana up to 1959. Gable worked into the 60s, intermittently in the 70s, and by the 80s had given up on the business of music. In 2001 Gable still plays his guitar around home and, when invited, at blues festivals. Recently he has been a recipient of our Instrument Acquisition Program.

Events

March 16: Eddie Tigner CD Release Party at Northside Tavern, Atlanta, GA.
April 6: John Dee Holeman will appear at the Columbia-Greene Community College Performing Arts Center in Hudson, NY.
July 7: Jerry McCain, John Dee Holeman, and Etta Baker will appear at the Mississippi Valley Blues Festival in Davenport, Iowa.
Willie King’s Freedom Creek Festival in Aliceville, AL is scheduled for the 2nd weekend in May. Contact Willis: 205-373-2521.
Nov. 8: Music Maker Blues Revival, Lucerne Blues Festival, Lucerne, Switzerland.
Donation

Music Maker Poster - 16" x 20" reproduction of photograph of David Johnson's hands by Axel Küstner (quality suitable for framing) $24.00 (incl. S&H)

Archival Quality Photograph - of Man with Harp Guitar (as seen on front cover) $200.00 8" x 10" image on 11" x 14" fiber paper (incl. S&H)

Music Maker T-shirt - Black shirt with multi-color print, $25.00 (incl. S&H) Circle size(s): M L XL XXL

Post Card Book — A collection of 30 5½" x 4¼" photographs by Axel Küstner $23.00 (incl. S&H)

Music Maker CD's $19.00 each (incl. S&H)
(quantity of each title)
Carl Rutherford: Turn Off the Fear
Essie Mae Brooks: Rain in Your Life
Eddie Tigner: Highway 66
Algie Mae Hinton: Honey Babe
Cootie Stark: Sugar Man
Ella Baker: Railroad Bill
Guitar Gabriel: Deep in the South
Guitar Gabriel: Volume I
John Dee Holeman: Bull Durham Blues
Neal Pattman: Prison Blues
Various Artists
Can't Be Far
Soul Dream Records
Matt Harding: Lovely Lady

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Music Maker Relief Foundation

is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the true pioneers and forgotten heroes of Southern musical traditions gain recognition and meet their day to day needs. Today, many such musicians are living in extreme poverty and need food, shelter, medical care, and other assistance. Music Maker’s aid and service programs improve the quality of recipients lives. Our work affirms to these artists’ that we value the gifts of music and inspiration they have delivered to the world. Our mission is to give back to the roots of American music.

Our criterion for recipients is they be rooted in a Southern musical tradition, be 55 years or older and have an annual income less than $18,000.

Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. is a tax exempt, public charity under IRS code 501 (c) 3.

Visit our Website at www.musicmaker.org

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