

MUSIC MAKER RAG

The Official Newsletter of the Music Maker Relief Foundation

Winter 2001



Man with Harp Guitar (circa. 1915)

© Austin Archives

Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc.
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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



Alpa Mae Hinton, Ned Palmer, Bill Lucado, Tim Duffy, Willie King Taylor, Phyllis Gray, GA ©Hinton/Tony

The Last Session

It's a gray world and no yellow line, snow falling harder now. The road to Maeberry twists slick and mean, once Winston-Salem resides in the rear view. There is no Maeberry, of course. It's really Mount Airy, Mount Pilot, also of Andy Griffith Show fame, 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, cased in ice, cold clothes screen 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 layers of flannel underneath quilted polyester. Just now he reaches underneath his chair, rooting around in his bucket of medicine in search of something he says is a rebrulizer coupling. A rebrulizer blows compressed air, turning Carl's medication into a fog to inhale.

"It's breathin' treatment," he says. "Gessin' 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 too long. This is Carl Rutherford's last recording session, so far as he can tell. He's moving to California to 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 War. He pronounces some words sort of like Loretta Lynn does, even though she's from Kentucky. War is West Virginia, you know. He knows about coal mining and about organizing workers. He knows how to praise God, and he knows about things that happen, somewhere in some dingy barroom, where the love of the gymnas takes the place of our dream. He's known all of this for a long time.

"God started War just as steep as it could be socked," he says. "You try to do anything with that land, you're going to have trouble. They're little spike hills, sock up like spikes."

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

Then there are the ones about the mines. "You've got to turn off the heat, when you come down into here," he sings, and that's when you know he never turned it off. Carl Rutherford saw bad things happen down there. "A man's life ain't nothin'. Lords, that's how it seems." That's 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 cage man got pissed off when Carl held up the coal show by vacillating, going back and forth about whether or not he could go back down into the mine.

"Finally my dad said, 'If you don't go now, you'll probably never go in again.' We'd just bought a strip of land, so I said, 'I need to stay and work and help pay the off.' I made \$18 a day. When I got the money saved, I was gone. I went to California."

These songs, this life - lived mostly in West Virginia and California, in coal and in timber and in music - are swirling around inside the cabin like the snow swirls outside of it. Warmer than the cold is cold. John Ferguson sits next to one wall, listening to Carl, smiling sometimes, playing along. Ferguson is world class. "I don't believe I've ever heard nobody any better than this fella," Carl says. "God, he plays so pretty." In Mahal, Carl uses 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 is blues?' They said, 'Carl, you are blues.' I said, 'Okay, then I can do that.'"

Not so much gets done today. The bass player shows up, then leaves, scared that the snow will keep him from getting to Asheville in time for a paying gig.

"All the rest of 'em were panicking with that snow," Carl says later on. "I don't mind the snow. It's the accumulation that gets me." That's a saying of Carl's.

Little spurts of brilliance, married by out-of-tune guitars, recording glitches or harmony singers who can't sing loud enough. That's what happens today. But the little spurts 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 spurts 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 not be the last session, good Lord willing), but the one before it, recorded in the same place. The same people were there before, except for Abe. Abe is the great Abraham Reid, the skinny, bad-ass harp player who got in a horrible car crash-up between playing on this record and playing on the Last Session.

"Abe got hurt real bad," Carl says. "He played great, and then he got hurt." Country music is full of stories like that. Hank Garland played great, then he got hurt. Abe's a blues man, though, and he's probably going to rally like Garland never did. The blues is a hard life, but it's a resilient one. Cursed and prayerful, that's what most bluesmen are. The prayers are softer than the blues.

Ferguson is all over Carl's album. Listen to what they played together. "I will cling to the old rugged cross," Carl sang. You could hear Carl breathe when he's not singing. Carl breathes loud. Ferguson set notes on top of each other, building little pyramids of vibrato, left stepping some to something once out of reach. "I will cling to the old rugged cross," Carl sang, and that's singing for real. "And I'll exchange it someday 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 shards of California honky-tonk.

"Ain't that something? 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 Limousine" and Ferguson copped 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 and 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 said or sung something that moved people to feel and act differently than 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 deaf mutes. She's a gorgeous thing, and they got to courtin'. He worked on a section gang. There was a wreck down the line somewhere, and the train's running way late. Real long sucker. She was going to the post office, and didn't know the train was running late. He was waving at 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 was beside of him. Then there was a medicine man come through that picked the harp and sold the black draught. Somebody gave him the poem, the words, and he set the melody to it."

Carl sang better in the shadow of Pilot Mountain than he'd sung in years. The reflux was under control (I found a doctor in West Virginia who knew how to control that stuff. I was sounding 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 love, at least. Crunched down into a dark, fearful place, breathing in the shit that's gonna kill you. Good love is different, but it's harder to happen upon. And none of it matters if the Bible is for real. That's where the clinging 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



Carl Rutherford, Pinnacle, NC

©Tim Duffy

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 crossed 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 on, cause I'm all set. The bankruptcy deal with Cells was a real heart breaker. But I'm going to pull through with help from the Music Makers.

Captain Luke & Cool John and Coozie Stark gave a command performance at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Christmas party sponsored by Bill Lucado's Southern Lard and Lumber Company. Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi 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.

Captain Luke & Cool John appeared live on the radio in NC at WNCN, WUNC, and in GA on WRDX; they appeared on national television on the PRX Network show, "The Pursuit," and on "Roy's Folks" here in NC promoting their new album.

Neal Pattman, Cool John Ferguson, Mulikat, Coozie Stark, Tim Duffy, Hansel Creech and Janet Daniel all performed at the Lucerne Blues Festival in Switzerland last November. We applaud directors Fritz Jäcker and Guido Schmidt for featuring so many authentic blues artists.



Coozie Stark, Greenville, NC

© Mark Austin

Coozie 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.

Essa 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.

Coozie 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 magazines and his new release on Roccaster Records has been well received.



Chris Uhler, Taj Mahal, Mulikat, Maxavine Hayes, Beverly Watkins, Ardie Dean, Jon Swartz
Winston-Salem, NC

© Mark Austin

Programs

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.



Eddie Tigner, Athens, GA
©Tim Duffy



Carl Rutherford, Wix, WY
©Azel Kuttner



Essie Mae Brooks, Perry, GA
©Tim Duffy

Review

First reaction to *Outsider Lounge Music* can involve abject, gasp-mouthed shock. Here is a virtual unknown, Captain Luke, singing in a basso-profundo 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 loveless 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 jargon on Luke's self-penned "Old Back Back." The recording is audiophile quality, and the musicianship is phenomenal.

- Peter Cooper & Craig Hengstert, The Nashville Tennessean
- Record Round-Up the Best of 2000



Captain Luke & Cool John, Winston-Salem, NC
©Tim Duffy

Music Maker News

Rachel Shabets, 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.

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

Etta Thompson of AF wrote, "The atmosphere at the foundation's 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 Lounges Music album artwork and design and Eddie Tigner's Round 46 album cover.

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



Pete Townshend, Madison Square Garden, NY © Robert Kirk

This February, All-Star Charity.com will auction a signed special edition Pete Townshend, Gibson SG. This guitar is serial #009, one of ten that was made for Pete. We are very grateful to Taj, Bonnie and Pete for their contributions to raise money for our mission.

Lewis Goldstein & Erica Darling spent four months in Pensacola

dedicating themselves to MMRF. Lewis launched our first Holiday Gift Program and Erica worked as our publicist. They did great work and we thank them.



Pete Townshend, Gibson SG serial no. 009 © Tim Guffy

We salute Mathew Chobert, Neal Alpert, Feste Frown, David Skolts and Rio Saka 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, Cooke Stark, Whizzer Brixches, Maxine Hayes, and many of our friends from around the country at MMRF headquarters.

Artist Feature



Joseph Zero, Albert Davis, Guitar Gable & Freddie Labien, Lafayette, LA © Gabriel Perrodin Archives

Gable Perrodin 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 Mumbo" and became Guitar Gable; his band was the Musical Kings. Gable went on to record several titles for the Excello label including "Irene", "Guitar Rumbos" 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 Holoman will appear at the Columbia-Greene Community College Performing Arts Center in Hudson, NY

July 7: Jerry McCain, John Dee Holoman, 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 Willie: 205-373-2521.

Nov. 8: Music Maker Blues Revival, Lucerne Blues Festival, Lucerne, Switzerland.



— **Music Maker Poster** - 16" x 20" reproduction of photograph of David Johnson's hands by Axel Küzner (quality suitable for framing) **\$14.00 (incl. S&H)**

— **Archival Quality Photograph** - of Man with Harp Guitar (as seen on front cover) **\$100.00** 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 6 1/2" x 4 3/4" photographs by Axel Küzner **\$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
- Esie Mae Brooks: Rain in Your Life
- Eddie Tigner: Highway 66
- Capt. Luke & Cool John: Outsider Lounge Music
- Algia Mae Hinton: Honey Babe
- Cootie Stark: Sugar Man
- Etta Baker: Railroad Bill
- Guitars Gabriel: Deep in the South
- Guitars Gabriel: Volume I
- John Dee Holeman: Bull Durham Blues
- Neal Pattman: Prison Blues

Various Artists

- Came So Far
- Soulem Records
- Matt Harding: Lovely Lady

— **Cash Donation** (fully tax deductible)

— **Total Donation** (International donors add \$5 USD for shipping on premium items)

All new and renewing donations will be matched by the Lucado Challenge.

Note: Due to IRS regulations the tax deductible portion of a donation is reduced by the value of premiums received by the donor.

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If you would like to make your donation by Mastercard or Visa please call 336.325.2905 (M-F 9 to 5 EST) or Fax 336.325.3183 (anytime), donate through our website at www.musicmaker.org or write us at the address below.

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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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