



## Blues Bytes

*BluesWax* Sittin' In With Larry Carlton  
By Robert Putignano

**Larry Carlton** When one thinks of **Larry Carlton** the words "guitar god" and "world class" come to mind. Carlton sharpened his guitar skills in the clubs and studios of Los Angeles. He first hit the road when he toured with the **Fifth Dimension** in 1968 and began doing studio sessions around 1970. In 1971, Carlton was asked to join the **Crusaders** (perhaps their finest version of the band, which also included **Chuck Rainey** on bass) shortly after they'd decided to drop the word "Jazz" from their name, and stayed on until 1976, and he also found time to do a steady flow of studio session work for literally hundreds of recordings in every genre and his credits include performing on more than one hundred gold albums!



Carlton's studio credits include a wide range of musicians and groups, such as **Steely Dan**, **Donald Fagen**, **Jerry Garcia**, **Cass Elliot**, **Booker T.**, **Tom Scott**, **Etta James**, **Quincy Jones**, **Bobby Blue Bland**, **Ray Manzarek**, **T-Bone Walker**, **Ben Sidran**, **John Klemmer**, **Allen Toussaint**, **Deodato**, **Thelma Houston**, **Stanley Clarke**, **Billy Cobham**, **Lee Ritenour**, **Marlena Shaw**, **Kevin Mahogany**, **Bill Withers**, **Tim Weisberg**, **Nancy Wilson**, **Linda Ronstadt**, **Michael Franks**, **Joni Mitchell**, and many more too numerous to mention. He also recorded a number of LPs under his own name, starting with 1968's *With a Little Help From My Friends* (Uni) and 1973's *Playing/Singing* on the legendary, well distributed, and highly collectable Blue Thumb record label. And, yes, Carlton did sing on that LP!

Carlton recorded his self-titled debut for Warner Brothers in 1978, not long after he was widely recognized for his groundbreaking guitar playing on Steely Dan's *Royal Scam*.

He continued balancing studio session work and touring, and in 1986 on MCA Records *Discovery* contained an instrumental remake of **Michael McDonald's** hit "Minute By Minute" that garnered a Grammy Award for Best Pop Instrumental Performance in 1987. Carlton's live album *Last Night*, released in 1987, also got him a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Instrumental Performance.

Carlton was the victim of gun violence when juveniles shot him in the throat outside his Room 335 studio, near Burbank, California. But through intensive therapy and his well-known positive frame of mind, Carlton completed *On Solid Ground* in 1989. Carlton also founded Helping Innocent People (HIP), a non-profit group to aid victims of random gun violence. Carlton's output over the years has been steady and from a journalist's point of view Carlton is always a joy to work with, as he is always enthusiastic to meet with the press. This is my third radio interview with Carlton and the first to be documented otherwise. This interview took place just as his latest CD was about to be released, that being the outstanding *Live In Tokyo* with **Robben Ford**, on Carlton's newly founded 335 Record label.

**Bob Putignano for *BluesWax*: How are you doing Larry?**

**Larry Carlton:** Hey Bob, nice to hear from you, I'm doing great!

BW: This new CD with you and Robben Ford is killer!

**LC:** Why thank you, and it's been a long time coming, as Robben and I met around 1974.

**BW: That must have been during the time you were working with Joni Mitchell?**

**LC:** That's right. I wasn't able to go on the road with Joni after we did *Court and Spark*, and **Tom Scott** had heard about this young guitar player from Northern California named Robben Ford, so Tom invited Robben to come to L.A. to join Joni's touring band and that's when Robben became a member of the **L.A. Express** and went on tour, them and Joni. That's when I met Robben and, Bob, the first time I heard him, I was just flabbergasted! That young little guy was playing great and we immediately became friends, and he started to come over to my house and we would play our guitars. Come to think of it, we actually played gigs together every Tuesday night for a couple of months at Dante's Jazz Club in North Hollywood, California, so Robben and I go way back. Over the years people kept asking when Robben and I were going to make a record. So we finally did it!

Over the years people kept asking when Robben [Ford] and I were going to make a record. So we finally did it!

BW: Robben told me that there will be a couple of DVDs of you playing together.

**LC:** Yes, keep checking [www.LarryCarlton.com](http://www.LarryCarlton.com), [www.335Records.com](http://www.335Records.com), and [www.Mr335.tv](http://www.Mr335.tv), which is very interesting. And you are right as we have a live DVD of this current CD, *Live In Tokyo*, plus Robben and I went to Paris last December and we did an unplugged version of the show with an upright bass, drums, and our two guitars, which was very unique and something our fans have never seen before.

**BW: How did unplugged come about?**

**LC:** We wanted to take advantage of a good opportunity as we got invited to play in Paris and did not want to do the same show we did in Japan, so we thought unplugged would be cool, so we did it and captured it for an upcoming DVD release.

BW: Robben had mentioned that you both will be doing some touring together. Will there be any unplugged shows?

**LC:** Not since Paris, we haven't done any unplugged shows, as we want to represent the current *Live In Tokyo* CD.

BW: About a month ago when I interviewed Robben he told me about *Live In Tokyo*, which was not yet available in the U.S., so I went on eBay and purchased the EMI-Japan version.



**LC:** Now it's on my label, 335 Records, and we are preparing to make some big announcements in *Guitar* magazine and *Guitar Player* about the *Live In Tokyo* CD and about the label, so then people will know how to get it. But right now people can go to [www.LarryCarlton.com](http://www.LarryCarlton.com) or [www.Mr335.tv](http://www.Mr335.tv) and get a copy.

**BW:** Are there sample tracks available on your websites?

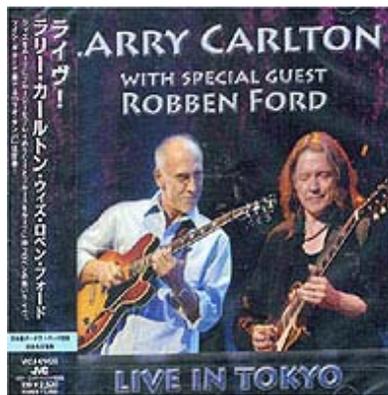
**LC:** Absolutely.

**BW:** Song selections for this CD: how were they determined and was it a collaborative effort?

**LC:** When I presented this project to Robben I said we should each write three or four new songs, then let's each pick two songs out of our catalog that we think our audience would enjoy hearing the other guy play on, which to me kind of made sense.

**BW:** Interesting. That's a very intellectual approach to prepare in advance for making this new recording. Plus, having Robben's vocal tune on here was probably a good idea, that being "Talk to Your Daughter," which kind of put his solo career on the map.

**LC:** Absolutely, "Talk to Your Daughter" was my suggestion to Robben, as he discontinued performing "Talk to Your Daughter" for the last couple of years; he was kind of burned out on the tune. But I told him [Larry in a growled voice] that I think everyone wants to hear us do that one together.



**Larry Carlton's  
*Live! With Special Guest Robben Ford***

**BW:** I have a lot of favorite tracks on this CD, but where did "That Road" come from?

**LC:** "That Road" is a Robben composition; that is one section of a song Robben was working on, so when my project with Robben came along he kept that one section and titled it "That Road" because it was so appropriate for the two guitars.

**BW:** And "Two Bad" is your composition, is that a play on words?



**LC:** Could be a play on words!

**BW:** I wish you all the luck with this new CD, but I don't think you're going to need it, as people are going to be clamoring to get a copy, especially considering the prowess of your two guitars.

**LC:** And I knew when Robben and I did this project together that you Bob, you were personally going to love it!

**BW: Come on, Larry!**

**LC:** And I have one more project that I think you personally Bob are going to love also as in three weeks I am going back to Japan with the **Sapphire Blue Horn Section** to record a live album, but this time my special guest is **Keb' Mo'**.

**BW: Oh, Wow! You are hanging with the Blues!**

**LC:** Yeah, Keb' and me, plus a horn section. And it should be released next year.

**BW:** This should be extremely interesting.

**LC:** It's a very cool project.

**BW:** Keb' has a several tracks on that new Mike Post album by the L.A. Blues Alliance.

**LC:** Mike Post had actually called me to see if I could participate on that record, but I was not able to, nor have I heard Keb's tracks. But I do know that Mike was excited about the recording and called my house one night and told me he wanted to put this Blues thing together where the guys just come in to play, no rehearsal, just start jamming, because that's the way they used to make records in the old days.

**BW:** I miss those days. I always go back to my childhood roots and loved the way a lot of those Seventies recordings came together, especially the great jamming LPs on the Atlantic and Blue Thumb labels that you were a part of with your solo LP and of course with the Crusaders. Guys like you, Ben Sidran, Phil Upchurch, and others, told me that they basically just let you guys jam and left the tapes running, and that's how a lot of the LPs of that era were created.

**LC:** That's right, a very different time and of course there were no *Pro-Tools*. [Laughs]

**BW:** I would love to see or write a book about a label like Blue Thumb. I'm sure Tommy LiPuma would be into it. There is still a lot of space and quotes from Tommy on the Verve website. He seems very fond and proud of that era.

**LC:** Oh yeah, Tommy would definitely be into seeing Blue Thumb getting documented like that.

# LARRY CARLTON

**BW:** In the meantime, checkout Larry's website and become a proud owner of this high quality new CD, *Live In Tokyo*, with the two world-class guitar players; Larry Carlton and Robben Ford.

**LC:** Thanks Bob, I really appreciate your ongoing support and enthusiasm and I hope everyone enjoys the new recording.

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