

Larry Carlton – Sapphire Blue

I learned a lot of lessons in my parents' living room with a bass guitar in my hands. Some of my musical teachings came easily and others took a while to absorb. Although I've since left the guitar behind, I grew to understand how music provides an outlet for the human experience. Music can heal. It can make the spirit soar or it can simply give respite to the weary traveler. And sometimes you just gotta sing the blues.

An older guitar-man captivated me one night at a St. Louis show. It was hot, and sweat was dripping from his brow. Although his body was weary, his fingers continued to fly effortlessly across the strings. There was a story to tell, and he wasn't going to stop until it was complete. As I listened, I grew to realize that the diary he was sharing wasn't necessarily his own. It was if my own life was being written in a series of chords and raw melodies. I'll never forget what he said to us. Perhaps it was the best lesson yet. He simply responded, "The blues is nothin' but the truth, baby."

Perhaps no other guitarist rings as true as Larry Carlton. He has a truckload of studio sessions on his resume and a prolific solo career. As a member of Fourplay he contributed to the release of Heartfelt in 2002. (Rumor has it that Fourplay will be touring again in 2004.) Carlton has worked with Stanley Clark, Joni Mitchell, The Crusaders, Steely Dan and a host of others. As a talented producer, writer and arranger, you can catch his work on soundtracks and television themes.

On January 13, 2004 Larry Carlton will release Sapphire Blue. This album isn't your Momma's dressed up jazz. Full of grit and emotion. Sapphire Blue is a celebration of the soul. Carlton holds nothing back and tells it like it is. In an arrangement that swings "Friday Nights Shuffle" starts things off with big horn sounds and a rhythmic organ. The addition of generous brass and winds adds depth and color to the arrangement. Carlton continues with the horn back-up throughout most of the CD. For instance, "A Pair of Kings" is unforgiving in the pursuit of grooving excellence. Carlton uses the horns to drive the piece. The guitar leads, but is free to sing at will. The result is a mixture that oozes with heartfelt delight.

Carlton spreads the gospel of the blues throughout the CD. "Night Sweats" gently caresses, while the colors run clear in the title track, "Sapphire Blue." There is a bit more of a jazz flow to "7 for Ya'." However, the guitar still maintains a tight blues flavor. "Slightly Dirty"

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has a funky vibe and lots of layered instrumentation. Old-fashioned blues are revisited in "Just An Excuse to Play the Blues." The organ and piano lines compliment the nighttime feel of the arrangement. "Take Me Down" marvels in a purified offering that is technically challenging. This song reminds me of the music of rural America. No fancy electronics here... just a pure essence of the moment.