

Mp3 Jim Paul Blair - Fresh Off The Strings



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Bluegrass with a fresh approach. Traditional approach to classic country, pop, and rock tunes. Featuring Byron Berline, Levi Dennis, and Chris Joslin. Also, two new songs by Larry Cornell. 13 MP3 Songs

COUNTRY: Bluegrass, FOLK: Modern Folk Details: "Fresh Off The Strings" is Jim Paul Blair's first solo release. Although presented in the style of traditional bluegrass, "Fresh Off The Strings" delivers original arrangements of classic bluegrass, country, and rock along with three new tunes. Bill Monroe's "Can't You Hear Me Calling" is performed in a style influenced by the late Stevie Ray Vaughn while tunes previously recorded by Merle Haggard, Conway Twitty, George Gershwin, Grand Funk Railroad, and The Monkees are performed in a style influenced by Bill Monroe. Among friends contributing help in the studio include Byron Berline, Levi Dennis, Don Morris, Monica Taylor, Steve Thomas, and Chris Joslin. "Fresh Off The Strings" was recorded at Cimarron Sound Lab in Tahlequah, Oklahoma and engineered and produced by Jeffrey Parker. Previous collaborations were issued with The Neverly Brothers, The Neverly Hillbillies, and The Bonham Revue. He has also contributed to recent recordings of Randy Pease, Greg Jacobs, Eddie Glen, and The Delicious Militia. Live performances are currently split with four groups: Country band City Moon, providing vocals, rhythm guitar, and occasional mandolin and banjo; classic/original rock band The Neverly Brothers as vocalist and lead guitarist; and bluegrass bands The Bonham Revue and The Neverly Hillbillies providing vocals and playing banjo. Jim also occasionally guest appears with Wild Card, Tom Skinner, and The Red Dirt Rangers. Born in Odessa, Texas, he spent most of his years growing up in Clayton, Oklahoma. Being the son of former Texas Playboys member Ramona Reed, he was exposed to the music of Bob Wills at an early age. After ten years of playing in bands around Stillwater and Oklahoma City (The Red Valley Barnstormers, Garth Brooks, Jim Alexander, Hickory Wind), Jim moved to Nashville in 1989 where he became an original member of The Neverly

Brothers and The Neverly Hillbillies (formerly Free Wheel Drive). After moving back to the Tulsa area in 1998, he is busier than ever. Jim also serves on the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma International Bluegrass Festival and Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame Foundation

Museum Review by JOHN WOOLEY
World Scene Writer 8/5/2003 Tulsa World

You don't have to listen to "Fresh Off the Strings," a fine new bluegrass-based CD with a left-of-center approach, to know there's something a little different about Jim Paul Blair. All you have to hear is his reason for heading for Nashville from Oklahoma back in the late '80s. As he explained recently, he actually migrated to Nashville to not do music. "I guess it's ironic," he said with a chuckle. "But when I went, I was living in Oklahoma City and playing so much music that I went to Nashville to kind of try and get away from it all. "I really just wanted to get down there and be obscure and soak it all up -- but a lot of my friends gradually started moving down there, and it wasn't long before I was playing again." Singer-banjo player-guitarist Blair can be forgiven for wanting a respite back then. After all, he'd been around the music business since his birth. His mother, vocalist Ramona Reed, was one of Bob Wills' best-known Texas Playgirls, and she'd been with Wills' band for several years when Blair came along. "I remember when I was real young and they were playing down at San Antonio," he said. "I was with my mother and, as I recall, we were in this new motel that had just been built on the edge of town. "I was amazed at how big the toad-frogs were around the pool, and when I came back to our room I had a wastebasket full of 'em. Bob was in the room, and when he said, 'Son, what have you got there?' I reached in, pulled one out, and stuck it in his face. "My mom just about came unglued -- and so did Bob. As I recall, he didn't stay in the room very long after that." As a student at Oklahoma State University, Blair worked in a bluegrass band called the Red Valley Barnstormers, whose lineup occasionally included a friend named Garth Brooks. "I met him through my sister," Blair remembered. "He was a year behind me in college, and he called me out of the blue one day, introduced himself and asked if I wanted to jam. I said sure, and he was at my door in about five minutes. He lived in Iba Hall and I was in Bennett, and I said, 'Boy, you must drive fast.' He said, 'I ran.' " Blair chuckled again. "We played until dawn, and he ended up doing some things with our band from time to time. "The biggest thing we did together was opening for the New Grass Revival at Horse Thief Canyon in Perkins back in September of '84. One of our guys couldn't make it, and Garth filled in. We had a blast that night." Blair continued to play around Stillwater and Oklahoma City until his relocation to Nashville. He moved back to the state in '98 and continued working steadily. Currently, he appears with the country band City Moon, the rock band

the Neverly Brothers ("kind of a blue act," he noted), and the bluegrass groups the Bonham Revue and the Neverly Hillbillies. "I've been playing more than ever," he said. "A lot of it has to do with me hooking up with Byron Berline, and Virgil Bonham, and getting involved with the bluegrass festival in Guthrie (which Berline runs). It's much easier to work here than it is in Nashville." Famed fiddler Berline lends his talents to a number of cuts on "Fresh Off the Strings," which includes three original tunes in addition to covers of songs by everyone from the Monkees to Bob Wills, Conway Twitty to George Gershwin. "This has been floating around in my head for 10 years or better," he said of the disc. "I didn't want to do anything you'd hear anywhere else. I didn't want to do Flatt and Scruggs and have it sound just like Flatt and Scruggs. "I do one Bill Monroe song, 'Can't You Hear Me Callin',' but I kind of approached it the way Stevie Ray Vaughan would have done it." Other cuts include "Gonna Buy Me a Dog," first recorded by the Monkees, and a beautiful if unorthodox arrangement of the Bob Wills classic "Faded Love," with just Blair's voice and guitar. " 'Gonna Buy Me a Dog' was one of my earliest favorite songs," he said, laughing. "It's off the first Monkees album, which came out in '66 or '67, and my older sister had it. "I had two older sisters, and when they went off to school, I'd go through their records. That's how I found it. " 'Faded Love' is almost a bonus track," he added. "I always wanted to learn how to play 'Faded Love' like (the great Wills guitarist) Eldon Shamblin played it. I came up with this arrangement a long time ago. I went in the studio and did the vocal and guitar at the same time. "My brother was going to come in and put a fiddle part on it, but we never could get our schedules together. So I had culled it out of this project. But then my daughter heard it and said, 'It's got to be on there.' So I put it back on. "I always imagined that if Eldon had ever sung that song," Blair concluded, "that's the way he would've done it." John Wooley john.wooley@tulsaworld.com Review in Bluegrass Unlimited (December 2003) The multi-talented Jim Paul Blair has mastered several bluegrass instruments including banjo, guitar, and mandolin, and "Fresh Off The Strings" proves to be the ideal vehicle to showcase his versatility. Several of the 13 selections are recognizable pieces like "Faded Love", "That's How I Got To Memphis," and a spirited version of Bill Monroe's "Can't You Hear Me Callin'". The numbers that really stand out are novelty pieces like "Stupid Cupid" (not to be confused with the 1950s Connie Francis pop hit), the lamentation of a luckless individual who just can't get his love life on track. Also included is Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart's "Gonna Buy Me A Dog" and "I Don't Know A Thing About Love" (the latter a major country hit for the late Conway Twitty). "Fresh Off The Strings" is an entertaining musical offering that is assured to enhance the stature of Jim

Paul Blair as a pending force in bluegrass music OKLAHOMA BLUEGRASS GAZETTE REVIEWED BY CHARLIE BLACKWELL THE SONGS ARE: LONESOME FUGITIVE * THAT'S HOW I GOT TO MEMPHIS * HERE SHE COMES * A FACE IN THE CROWD * FRESH OFF THE STRINGS * I DON 'T KNOW A THING ABOUT LOVE * STUPID CUPID * CAN'T YOU HEAR ME CALLING * GONNA BUY ME A DOG * OLD FLAMES CAN'T HOLD A CANDLE TO YOU * LADY BE GOOD * SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL * FADED LOVE. THERE YOU HAVE THIRTEEN OF THE FINEST SONGS EVER RECORDED BY ANYONE. THIS JIM PAUL BLAIR IS A MASTER AT WHAT HE DOES AND THAT IS MAKING MUSIC WHEATHER ITS BANJO, MANDOLIN OR GUITAR AND THIS CD PROVES IT. I HAVE HEARD JIM PLAY SEVERAL TIMES OVER THE YEARS AND HE JUST SEEMS TO GET BETTER. I REALLY LIKE ALL THE SONGS ON THIS CD AND I KNOW YOU WILL TOO IF YOU ONLY HEAR IT. THE LIST OF MUSICIANS ON THIS ONE IS TOO LONG TO LIST SO I WILL JUST SAY THEY ARE ALL TOP NOTCH AND IF YOU SAW THE LIST YOU WOULD AGREE WITH ME. SOME OF THE SONGS I HAVENT HEARD BEFORE BUT THEY ARE ALL GOOD. I THINK JIM DID A FANTISTIC JOB ON THIS CD. YOU CAN GET IT BY WRITING TO JIM PAUL BLAIR, 2610 BOSTON, MUSKOGEE, OK 74401 OR CALL 1 (918) 869-6776 OR E MAIL HIM AT jpblair@sbcgloball FORGOT TO ASK JIM THE PRICE BUT I DON'T THINK HE WILL ROB YOU AND YOU WILL LOVE THE MUSIC.

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