



November 7, 2014 by [S. Victor Aaron](#)

Various Artists – *The Healing Blues* (2014)

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I Die a Little, by Haymarket Riot for the Healing Blues Proj...



This album is for a great cause, to raise funds for the Interactive Resource Center, an innovative day resource center helping people in the Greensboro, North Carolina area who are homeless or facing homelessness. The Healing Blues Project is a vehicle for funding the IRC, an initiative begun by Greensboro College Art professor Ted Efrehoff.

Money is generated by selling a blues-oriented record by a rotating roster of local bands, but this CD, also called *The Healing Blues* (October 5, 2014, Healing Blues Records), uses a novel approach to come up with the music. All fifteen songs are drawn from stories out of the IRC, and these storytellers were put together with professional songwriters and they received co-writing credits for these. From there, it was left to the album producer Dave Fox (yes, *that* Dave Fox) to assemble the area musicians to bring these songs to life and put on tape.

The bands that participated include Lawyers Guns & Money, Big Bump and the Stun Gunz, the Fairlanes and Haymarket Riot. The Healing Blues Band, consisting of Fox (keys), Sam Frazier (guitar), Benjy Johnson (guitar), Chuck Cotton (drums) and Roger Kohrs (bass), served as the backing band for nine of the tracks, though. About

a dozen or so singers took turns handling lead vocal chores, occasionally even sharing them.







So what's the music like? There's something for almost everybody's blues preferences and the stories are genuine and varied not just in fact but in *feel*, too. A wide assortment of composers helping out helps to make the music behind the songs is diverse, and everyone gave a good effort because these songs are uniformly solid. As a result, there's no real filler, and Fox's production throughout is clean and gives a national caliber sound to these regional acts.


Just as a person is a unique character, so are the songs that depict these people. Sometimes it means the topics don't lend themselves to the standard 12-bar blues format or anything blues strictly speaking but the blues is in the DNA. It certainly doesn't matter to a rock 'n' soul tune like "Walter's Walk" or a adult contemporary number sung with upfront sincerity by Kristy Jackson, or even head-nodding funky RnB of "I Want To Be Like Anita" that gets its blues from a yowling harmonica. And the other side of the spectrum, there's the down-home Johnny Cash country of "God Help U All."

Other times, the straight up blues is the only thing that will do, such as the handclapping country gospel blues of "Thank God for Mrs. Daniels," the Chicago-style blues shuffle of "I'm Gonna Build Me A Home," or a captivating talking blues of a veteran of the Middle Eastern wars as spoken and sung by Fox ("Bitter Route"). There's plenty here for blues-rock lovers and the tasty guitar licks that usually from that style, like the Cream-era Clapton solo from Jim O'Gara that comes roaring out of nowhere on "I Die A Little" and just as quickly recedes again, the yearning lines of O'Gara for the Texas-styled blues of "What's Inside" or the jazzy lead of Bubba Klinefelter that graces of soulful blues "Perfect Smile."

Usually, the broad variation of styles tend to drag down "various artists" records because of the unevenness that inevitably results from these projects but that's not the case here; the creatively organic way this album came together avoided that pitfall. *The Healing Blues* is music that you should buy because it will make you feel good, while making those facing homelessness feel better, too. Everybody wins.

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