

Papa King Cole finds his voice on new CD

Wednesday, 06 January 2016 11:03 Richard Amery



Lethbridge bluesman Papa King Cole has released his long awaited new CD “Gutted to the Studs” which showcases a lot of the local talent he has played with over the years.

“The oldest song on it was recorded 10 years ago,” said Cole, reminiscing about a recent jam over Christmas break with long time band mate Daryll Düus who moved to B.C. a year ago.

Düus and one time band mates Earl McAuley and bassist Doug Freeman are on that oldest track — the blues classic “Hesitation Blues.”

King has been balancing music with a good career as along haul trucker, so he hasn’t done a lot of promotion for the CD. He released it to a packed house at the Owl Acoustic Lounge on Nov.

7.

He did all of the recording and mastering at his downtown studio, then sent it away to Pittsburgh for further mastering, but unfortunately had a few technical issues with DAT tape.

“It just showed up one day before the CD release party,” he observed, noting he was impressed with DHL Trucking company who had the CDs from Pittsburgh to the Coutts border in a day.

“And all I had to do was pay the duty,” he said.



SCOTT MEZEI, PAPA KING COLE, DOUG FREEMAN AND MEGAN BROWN PLAYING PAPA KING'S CD RELEASE PARTY, NOV. 7. PHOTO BY RICHARD AMERY

The CD is available exclusively at Blueprint Records in Lethbridge.

“It feels pretty good. It’s been a life changing experience,” said Cole, a notorious perfectionist who had the luxury of time thanks to having his own studio so he could tweak things as much as he needed to.

“I’ve been getting some good feedback on it from peers and people who don’t know me,” he said

While he has been chipping away at the project for 10 years including doing three different versions of crowd favourite “Beale Street Boogie,” the project came together quickly when he got talented local guitarists Scott Mezei and Steve Keenan in the studio.

“I did four songs with them and it all just fell into place. I’ve already written half of my next album,” he continued, adding he wrote 30 songs for this CD and had to choose a dozen of them for the CD including the three covers. The next one won’t be completed until 2017.

“I remember Scott and Steve were in the studio playing with their eyes closed. I was in the booth laughing my ass off. I couldn’t even communicate with them,” he said, eagerly anticipating his New Year’s Eve gig at the Rum Runner in Coleman with Steve Keenan and Megan Brown.

Former band mates Düus and Evan Uschenko, who have since moved from Lethbridge, play on several tracks on the CD including the highlight “500 Horses,” written about the experience of long distance trucking while in Twin Falls, Idaho.

“You know the saying about finding your voice? Well I’m finally finding my voice on this CD,” he said.

When he plays live, Cole plays drum pads with his feet, but was advised by friends like Geoff Arsenault who plays with talented Canadian bluesmen like Morgan Davis, to get a real drummer for the CD. Unfortunately nobody could quite capture the feel he was looking for so he bought a snare and a cymbal and ended up playing drums himself.

“He (Arsenault) said he was interested on playing drums on the next album,” Cole continued, adding he has two more years on the road hauling milk and cream before he can retire with a pension and focus on music.

“I figure I’ve got 10 years to do it. I’d rather die on stage than in a truck,” Cole quipped.

Cole grew up with musical parents who were talented musicians in their own right. He still plays his dad’s 1934 Gibson Century acoustic.

“My dad taught me how to play, my mom taught me how to love,” Cole continued.

“I remember travel ling around in the ’60s on a motorcycle with that guitar on my back,” he said, adding that is where he

first heard “Hesitation Blues,” which had been redone by a musician he couldn’t remember the name of.

“Beale Street Boogie,” reflects Cole’s interest in black history in the United States.

“I read a lot about it. But I just finished 12 Years a Slave” and realized there was so much I didn’t know. White people were brutal towards them,” he said.

He puts his own mark on Joe Williams’ blues classic “ Please Don’t Go” by adding a few of his own verses. That arises from performing it live.

“There are a lot of verses in it. A lot of the blues guys used to swap verses out,” he observed.

“There isn’t a show where I don’t forget the words to a song,” he said, adding he keeps the groove going and improvise the best he can, which the audience often appreciates.

He will be playing Plum, Jan. 9 with Scott Mezei and will be opening for Canadian classic rockers Chilliwack at Bullys, Jan 30 with a four piece band including bassist Doug Freeman, Mezei and Megan Brown.

He has already been booked to play the beer gardens for the 2016 Lethbridge Jazz Festival on June 17 with a five piece band.

A version of this story appears in the Jan. 6, 2016 edition of the Lethbridge Sun Times

— By Richard Amery, L.A. Beat Editor

Now you know.
Now tell the world.     SHARE THIS!

Last Updated (Wednesday, 06 January 2016 11:14)