

ABI WALLENSTEIN & BLUES CULTURE

featuring Steve Baker & Martin Röttger

- Rocking Roots'n'Rhythm -

THE BAND

Charismatic, innovative and always compellingly authentic - with this unusual trio featuring his long-time musical partner Steve Baker on harmonica and Martin Röttger on cajon, Abi Wallenstein has created one of the most exciting acts on today's European Roots Music scene.

Abi Wallenstein & Blues Culture present a unique stylistic fusion which integrates deep delta blues with funk and hip-hop beats and rough-cut rock with heart-rending ballads. The dynamic interplay between the three musicians is unpredictable and gripping. Their spontaneity and energy create a fascinating blend of diverse musical elements which defies definition and breaks the boundaries of conventional stylistic clichés. Forget about categories - this highly infectious mix is something for fans of good hand-made music everywhere!

Abi and Steve had known each other for almost 15 years when they decided to start working together as a duo in 1990. Their unique combination of energy, virtuosity and conviction has since made them one of the most exciting acts in this genre performing today - two leading European blues musicians who together put out a pulsating energy which no audience can ignore.

In January 2002 Abi and Steve invited Martin Röttger to perform with them on their annual Blues Celebration concert in Hamburg's legendary Fabrik. The combination surpassed all expectations and Blues Culture was born. Martin's grooving beats lend a whole new dimension to Wallenstein and Baker's exciting duo performances.

As a trio, the sound is even more immediate and gripping, the grooves are more danceable and the interplay between all three is so tight that the listener can't help but feel they've been playing together for years. Without any doubt this is a complete and highly unusual band which is redefining the boundaries of the genre.

THE MUSICIANS

Abi Wallenstein (guitar & vocals) is one of the seminal figures of the European blues scene. For over 30 years he has been winning the hearts of audiences all over Europe with his own charismatic brand of good rocking blues. Born shortly after the end of the second world war, he moved to Hamburg, Germany in the mid 1960s and has become the closest thing to a genuine folk hero to be found in these parts. His unique open-tuned fingerpicking guitar style is a fascinating blend of delta blues and rock&roll elements, combining rhythmic bass lines with melody and chord parts in a manner sometimes reminiscent of Big Joe Williams, at other times of Keith Richards and sometimes even of David Lindley. His playing seems deceptively simple at first, but reveals itself as multi-layered and complex, with an effortless groove which has inspired a host of imitators. He is also one of the few guitarists to master the difficult art of playing in different modal positions on the open G tuning.

Abi is also a remarkable singer. His raw and powerful voice, steeled by years of playing on the streets, is totally convincing, whether delivering deep blues or definitive renditions of soulful ballads. When the weather is good and his busy touring schedule permits, he can still sometimes be seen in the Hamburg inner city today, trying out new material on the "toughest stage in the world". In addition to numerous radio and TV appearances Abi has performed on countless blues festivals including the Ascona Jazz Festival (CH), Lahnstein SWF Blues Festival (D), Unna Blues Festival (D), Eslöv Blues Festival (S) and many more. He has also opened for such prestigious acts as Joe Cocker, Daniel Lanois, Robben Ford, George Thorogood and Johnny Winter.

Steve Baker (harmonica & backing vocals) was born and raised in London, England, and now lives near Hamburg, Germany. He took up the harp in 1969 and has been a full-time professional since 1975. Today he is undoubtedly one of the leading blues harmonica players on the European scene, and indeed one of the finest exponents of this instrument in the world. Among harmonica fans he has earned an international reputation for his outstanding and original playing as well as for his excellent books on the subject. Over the years Steve has become a kind of harmonica guru for numerous up and coming players. His highly individual style is an exciting fusion of traditional blues elements with innovative melodic ideas and showcases his mastery of dynamics and tone.

In addition to frequent live appearances, Steve gives regular harmonica workshops and is also much in demand as a session musician. He has been Hohner's international consultant for diatonic harmonicas since 1987 and is the author of "The Harp Handbook" (1990), acclaimed as the most comprehensive work on the diatonic harp published to date, which now enjoys cult status amongst the new wave of harmonica players in Europe and the USA (distributed worldwide by Music Sales Corp.). His recently published harmonica tuition CD-ROM was the first of its kind in the world. Steve has performed on stage with several legendary blues artists including ex-Beatle Tony Sheridan, Alexis Korner and Champion Jack Dupree. As well as radio and TV

appearances he has played on many international festivals including the Tamworth Country Festival (AUS), St. Petersburg Jazz Festival (RUS), Chicago Harmonica Extravaganza (USA), Rock am Meer (D, opening for the Scorpions), Tønder Festival (DK), Ospel Rhythm & Blues Festival (NL), Soulsvaer Blues Festival (N) and many others.

Martin Röttger migrated to Hamburg from his native Sweden as a child, where he began performing live with local jazz and blues bands in 1979 at the age of 12. He has played drums ever since and has appeared with such well-known artists as Chuck Berry and Louisiana Red. Today he is one of the European pioneers of the cajon, a fascinating percussion instrument originating from Peru. The cajon looks like a loudspeaker box and is played with the hands, while simultaneously serving as a seat for the player. Most commonly used as a percussion instrument in Flamenco, in the right hands it can sound astonishingly like a drum kit.

Martin appears to have been the first to discover how well-suited the cajon is for blues and boogie-woogie rhythms and has earned an excellent reputation in this scene within a comparatively short space of time. His minimalistic equipment and infectious enthusiasm perfectly complement the dynamic duo of Wallenstein and Baker!