

## MUSIC NOTES

by Mark Morris

Patrick Dodd is a Memphis blues singer/guitarist who is a fixture on Beale Street. Patrick has a very soulful, raspy voice and was recently on the singing competition show, The Voice, along with three other Memphis singers. As a result of this exposure, Patrick's excellent Future Blues EP was #4 on iTunes as of this writing. Shannon McNally became a resident of Oxford, MS after she was displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. Shannon plays roots music that she calls North American Ghost Music because she says music labels are dumb. She can be found performing solo, as part of The Wandering and as a duo with Amy LaVere. Shannon just released Small Town Talk, an album of Bobby Charles songs, and it is her best album (of 10) so far. Just as David Bowie's fans had finally accepted his retirement from music, a secretly recorded new album was announced on his sixty-sixth birthday on January 8, 2013, and it was released on March 8, 2013. This was totally unexpected, but Bowie has always been unpredictable, and he is poised to make a big comeback if he wants one. While Bowie was on his Ziggy Stardust Tour of America in 1972, he was also busy writing songs for the follow-up album called Aladdin Sane. It was a worthy successor to The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars, and it has just been re-issued as a remastered 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition.

### Patrick Dodd Trio – Future Blues



As a teenager in the 1990s, Memphian Patrick Dodd played alternative rock similar to Dave Matthews. He married his high-school sweetheart and quit playing music in 2002

shortly after they started a family. In 2009, with the support of his family, Dodd started playing music again, but he had matured into a blues rock sound instead of the alternative rock sound of his past. Dodd soon became a fixture on Beale Street with his blues rock trio and he was named Entertainer of the Year by the Beale Street Merchants Association in 2011. The Patrick Dodd Trio plays 300 nights a year on Beale as well as The Blue Monkey and at events such as The Cooper-Young Festival. They recorded their first EP, Future Blues, produced by Cody Dickinson of the North Mississippi Allstars, and it was released in December of 2011. Patrick Dodd made an appearance on The Voice in March of 2013 and wound up on Adam Levine's team, but lost in a battle to unique duo Midas Whale. Midas Whale is very entertaining, but they simply do not have the vocal chops of Patrick Dodd, so it was a disappointment to see Levine pick Midas Whale over Dodd. Of course, one could argue that it shouldn't be a surprise for the singer of Maroon 5 to pick style over substance, but to be fair, Levine said that it was the most difficult choice that he has made on The Voice for the two and a half seasons that he has been on the show. He also said that he wishes he had a voice like Patrick Dodd's. If Adam Levine had seen Patrick Dodd's return to Memphis as a guest star of The Sons of Mudboy at Minglewood Hall's 1884 Lounge, he would feel like a complete idiot for having passed on Patrick.

Patrick Dodd possesses a very naturally soulful voice that is full and raspy. He is also a fantastic guitarist, so he truly is the best of both worlds. While his vocals fit his blues rock perfectly, he is versatile enough to sing anything that he wants and make it sound good. I recall telling my wife at the Cooper-Young festival that my favorite song that Patrick played that day was an Al Green song, and only Al himself could have sung it better. I already owned the Future Blues EP, but I went up to see if Patrick had any other music for sale after his performance (not yet, but there is some already recorded), and I can testify that Patrick Dodd is just as down to earth and cool in real life as he appears on TV. What you see is what you get with Patrick, which in his case, is a very good thing. Patrick will be joining Action News 5 to re-cap and comment on The Voice as the show progresses.

Future Blues is a great aggressive blues rock EP that fans of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jonny Lang and Joe Bonamassa will love. All seven songs are strong, and they are passionately sung and played. The songs were recorded live in the studio and Patrick says that he decided to leave the vocal and guitar mistakes that he made on the recording so it would sound just like what you hear from the band live. Future Blues is highly recommended to blues and classic rock lovers alike, it truly is world class music. The physical CD can be purchased at Patrick Dodd shows, and the EP can be downloaded at iTunes or amazon.com. It is currently #4 on iTunes due to Patrick's appearance on The Voice. The best way to download Future Blues, however, is from the Bandcamp website. For \$7, it can be downloaded in high-quality mp3, FLAC, Apple

Lossless and just about any other format that you can imagine. Any and all formats can be downloaded for one \$7 charge. Here is the link:

<http://patrickdoddtrio.bandcamp.com/>

### **Shannon McNally – Small Town Talk (Songs of Bobby Charles)**



Shannon McNally's excellent new Small Town Talk album was actually recorded back in December of 2007, but it is just now being released. It features songs written by Bobby Charles, whose most well-known songs are Walking To New Orleans, recorded by Fats Domino, and See You Later Alligator, recorded by Bill Haley. Bobby had seen Shannon play her version of his Tennessee Blues in 2002, and the two became good friends. They decided to pick some of Bobby's lesser-known songs for Shannon to record, and Bobby had his good friend and writing partner Dr. John go see Shannon play as well. Dr. John loved Shannon's voice, and he became the album producer, using his Lower 911 Band to record the album. Sadly, Bobby Charles passed away in 2010 before the album was released. Small Town Talk boasts guest stars Derek Trucks and Luther Dickinson on guitars and Vince Gill sings a duet with Shannon.

The music on Small Town Talk is a mixture of swamp pop and folk with a bit of New Orleans funk. It ventures into classic country music periodically as well. Bobby Charles was a great songwriter and Shannon McNally is a great singer, and the music sounds very natural and unforced. Though most of these songs were written before she was born, Shannon says that she feels like they were written especially for her, and they really do sound that way. Small Town Talk is Shannon McNally's best album so far, and

it is well recorded, resulting in great fidelity. The vinyl LP version was meticulously mastered by Larry Nix for the best possible sound quality.

Shannon McNally will kick off the 2013 Beale Street Music Festival on Friday, May 3 at 6:00 p.m.

Currently, Small Town Talk can be streamed from [www.americansongwriter.com](http://www.americansongwriter.com)

### David Bowie – The Next Day / Aladdin Sane (40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)



Just as David Bowie seemed to be settled comfortably into retirement, he has released his twenty-fourth studio album (not counting the two Bowie-fronted Tin Machine band albums), and first in ten years. Fans were not expecting a new album, and many had speculated that Bowie was in bad health after suffering a heart attack on tour in 2004. The Next Day was secretly recorded in roughly sixty days, sporadically over a two year period, and features the album cover of Bowie's Heroes album from 1977 with a white square over Bowie's face and The Next Day title in plain text. The Heroes title is struck through with a black line. The Next Day is a rock album that is stylistically similar to the Heroes and Low albums, but there is more guitar on this album. Bowie recorded 29 songs for The Next Day, which has 14 songs (17 on the deluxe version). Bowie's producer Tony Visconti says that Bowie may have a second album following soon. Bowie has said that he will not tour in support of the album and Visconti has said that he doubts that Bowie will ever tour again at all.

The Next Day is a good album that grows on the listener, and it is great to have David Bowie back making music again. Bowie's voice has aged, but he knows his limitations, and he sounds great on The Next Day. Bowie chose the most subdued song Where Are

We Now? as the first single, because it is an introspective song, and people were going to be shocked that he was back after 10 years of silence. The song is not indicative of what the rest of the album is like, however. The rest of the album is much more upbeat (thankfully), and the title track would have been a much better choice as the lead-off single. Bowie has never been interested in repeating himself, so he will never record an album that sounds like his early to mid-1970s albums, but he did duplicate the late Mick Ronson's Marshall amplifier stack to be used by guitarists in the recording of this album. The Next Day is probably the best album that Bowie has made since Let's Dance in 1983, and it has been well received by critics and fans alike.

Aladdin Sane is David Bowie's 1973 follow-up album to his breakthrough The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars album. Aladdin Sane (a lad insane), was written during Bowie's Ziggy Stardust tour of America and recorded in London on break between the two legs of the U.S. tour, and shortly after the tour ended. Bowie played Memphis at the Ellis Auditorium on both legs of the tour, and the Memphis show on the first leg was the second Ziggy Stardust show performed in the U.S. Bowie refers to Aladdin Sane as his Ziggy goes to America album, and most of the songs include the city in parenthesis in which each song was written.

Aladdin Sane is considered to be one of David Bowie's best albums by most critics and fans. The iconic cover is instantly recognizable, as is The Jean Genie, the biggest song from the album that was written with an Iggy Pop type-character in mind. Blockbuster, a song by the British glam band The Sweet, uses the same riff as The Jean Genie, and caused some controversy in the U.K. when it was released shortly after The Jean Genie, when both songs became hits there (The Sweet were virtually unknown in the U.S. until 1974 after they dropped "The", so Blockbuster was never a hit here). The Jean Genie isn't the only good song on Aladdin Sane by a long shot. I actually like Panic In Detroit a lot better, and the entire album is great. All of the songs are originals, except for a barn-burning cover of The Rolling Stones' Let's Spend The Night Together, which foreshadowed Bowie's next all-covers album, Pin-Ups. There is another Rolling Stones connection as well - the song Lady Grinning Soul was inspired by singer Claudia Lennear, the inspiration behind The Stones' Brown Sugar. Bowie had added unique pianist Mike Garson to the Ziggy Stardust tour (guitarist/right hand man to Bowie Mick Ronson is said to have offered Garson the job after hearing him play 8 bars), and he made his recording debut with Bowie on Aladdin Sane. Garson's playing seemed like an odd fit for Bowie's music at the time, so Garson first played a bluesy piano solo for the song Aladdin Sane, but Bowie stopped him and told him to play it avant-garde style. Garson improvised and played the awesome solo in one take, and he says to this day it is the most asked about solo that he has ever recorded. Garson made significant

contributions to the Aladdin Sane album, and he wound up working with Bowie longer than any other musician has.

David Bowie had been on top of the world since the success of Ziggy, and his success continued to grow with Aladdin Sane. Bowie had always embraced controversy, and the gatefold album cover included a nude picture of Bowie with his genitals airbrushed out. RCA labelmates The Guess Who were experiencing a major slide in their success at the time and wrote a song called Glamour Boy that disparages Bowie, and they even went so far as to picture their overweight manager in a pose emulating Bowie's on the Aladdin Sane gatefold. RCA quickly pulled the ad poster, fearing that Bowie might sue them. Many people thought that Bowie was a flash in the pan, but he proved them wrong with his continued success. It was a shame that The Guess Who's popularity had diminished, they were still making good records with a guitarist who was just as good as the departed Randy Bachman, but they were picking a fight that they were never going to win with Glamour Boy.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of Aladdin Sane was remastered by Ray Staff, who also mastered the original vinyl LP (currently a major collector's item). The CD comes in a mini-LP sleeve that duplicates the original with the inner gatefold photo, lyric printed dust sleeve and a David Bowie fan club insert that came with early LP pressings. Unfortunately, there are no bonus tracks or vinyl LP or DVD audio as with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ziggy that came out last year. They could have at least included Bowie's great cover of Chuck Berry's Round and Round that was the B-Side to the Drive-In Saturday single. I would love to hear the alternate vocal mix of Watch That Man. This song was never issued as a single due to the lower volume of Bowie's vocals, but RCA chose this mix over the normal vocal mix version for some reason. It is disappointing that there are no extras on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, and surprising that there is no vinyl release (it would have sold out on Record Store Day without a doubt), but Aladdin Sane is still a great album that has stood the test of time.