



MATTHEW SKOLLER

AND

Chicago Wind

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MATTHEW SKOLLER is one of Chicago's most respected harmonica players and Blues bandleaders. For the past 36 years he has played all of Chicago's heaviest showcase venues and toured much of the world with his super tight ensembles. Deeply rooted in the tradition of the Chicago blues elders with whom he worked and studied, Skoller has developed a unique style that conjures the past while being firmly planted in the present. His songs explore many of the issues and realities of life during this age of technology, information and horrific upheaval. Skoller, known for his fiery and engaging performances, combines passionate harp playing and singing with original song writing and prodigious production skills. He has self-produced 5 of his own critically acclaimed CDs. As a producer he has produced two award-winning CDs by Lurrie Bell: *Let's Talk About Love* and *The Devil Ain't Got No Music*. Skoller penned the title cut of the latter which was nominated for **Song of the Year** by the Blues Awards in the US. The same album was awarded the **Prix Blues by L'Academie du Jazz** in Paris, France in 2012. Between 2009 and 2016 Matthew played on four Grammy nominated CDs: *Chicago Blues: A Living History* and *Still I Rise*, by Heritage Blues Orchestra, *Muddy Waters 100* (RAISIN'MUSIC) and Lurrie Bell's *Can't Shake This Feeling* (DELMARK 2016).

Matthew collaborated with his brother Larry Skoller (producer) on the Grammy nominated, historical project, *Chicago Blues A living History* and co-produced and played on volume two *The (R)evolution Continues* which won **Traditional Album of the Year** at the Blues Awards in 2012. He lent his production experience, deep knowledge of Chicago Blues history, and his harmonica to this project that is now being hailed by critics as one of the greatest Chicago Blues events of our time.

In 2016 Matthew released his *Blues Immigrant* CD the title cut of which was nominated for **Blues Song of the Year** by The Blues Awards.

Matthew has played in Mali, Mauritania, Tunisia, Cameroon, asked to be a featured guest with Lurrie Bell at The Japan Blues Festival in Aomori Japan in 2012, only to be asked back in 2013 to headline the same festival with his own group! Matthew has been invited to perform twice at the Residence of the U.S. Ambassador to France in Paris. As well as playing the world renown Montreux Jazz Festival in 2012 and many other festivals throughout Europe and the US. In 2013 Matthew was asked by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events to produce, organize and perform for the grand finale of the Chicago Blues Festival. Skoller's theme was

Old School, New Millennium. His mentor James Cotton headlined this star-studded event which was acclaimed as one of the best all-star events in recent Chicago Blues Festival history.

When not on tour Matthew and his group can be seen live in Chicago at many venues including Buddy Guys Legends who has been employing Matthew since their club opened in 1989. 33 years and counting! Matthew has emerged as one of Chicago's most accomplished blues-based artists.

In 2018 Matthew was hired as the Program Director for the Logan Center Bluesfest by the University of Chicago. He continues to curate Blues programming for The Logan Center for the Arts.

HISTORY

As with many blues performers of his generation, Skoller has been influenced as much by Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Jimi Hendrix and the Allman Brothers as he has by Little Walter, Muddy Waters, Percy Mayfield and other legends of the blues. Skoller's take on the blues tradition is about letting his own voice come through – his culture, his experience. Skoller moved to Chicago in January 1987. His already mature harmonica playing led

a number of musicians to take him under their wings. He paid his dues backing up a “who’s who” of creative and passionate musicians, including the legendary Jimmy Rogers, Big Time Sarah, and Deitra Farr. Skoller’s emotional, high-energy style caught the ear of veteran bassist/vocalist J.W. Williams who invited Skoller to join his band, the Chi-Town Hustlers. The next year, Skoller became a member of Big Daddy Kinsey and The Kinsey Report, recording and touring with the band throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Despite his success working with others, Skoller heard the crying of an inner voice and since 1992 has led his own band. Like a tornado, he’s blown through the Chicago blues scene. During the 1996 Democratic convention, Tom Brokaw’s *NBC Nightly News In-Depth Report* featured the Matthew Skoller Band performing live at B.L.U.E.S. on Halsted St. in Chicago.

Also in ’96, the band was awarded an artist-in-residency position at the Disney Institute in Orlando, Florida.

RECORDINGS

Matthew has appeared on records released by all of Chicago’s blues labels: Alligator Records, Blind Pig Records, Delmark Records and Earwig Records.

Besides having played on and produced two award winning Lurrie Bell albums in 2007 (*Let’s Talk About Love*) and 2012 (*The Devil Ain’t Got No Music*), in 2013 Matthew was the featured harp player on Lurrie Bell’s latest release on Delmark Records for the CD *Blues In My Soul*. And in 2016 Matthew was again featured on another Lurrie Bell CD, the Grammy nominated *Can’t Shake This Feeling*.

Skoller also was a featured soloist on both volumes of the Grammy nominated project: *Chicago Blues: A Living History*.

Matthew also played on Heritage Blues Orchestra’s Grammy nominated 2011 release of *And Still I Rise* as well as Toronzo Cannon’s 2011 Delmark release *Leaving Mood*.

Matthew’s original compositions have been recorded by amongst others: Carey Bell, H-Bomb Ferguson and Lurrie Bell.

In 1996 the first Matthew Skoller Band CD was released, *Bone to Pick with You*, which *Vintage Guitar Magazine* called “a strong debut.”

In 1999, the band released *Shoulder to the Wind*, for

which French Blues magazine *Soul Bag* noted Skoller’s “excellence as an instrumentalist, but also as a composer.”

In February 2000, Alligator Records employed him to play harmonica on Koko Taylor’s CD, *Royal Blue*.

TapRoot followed in 2003.

Tongue ‘N Groove Records released the fourth Matthew Skoller Band album, *These Kind Of Blues!*, in January 2005. This album was picked as one of *Mojo* magazine’s **Top ten blues albums of 2005**. In 2016 Matthew released *Blues Immigrant* the title cut of which was nominated for **Song Of the Year** by the Blues Awards. It received rave reviews from nearly every blues publication in the business.

Skoller’s harmonica is featured on 11 songs on the CD, *Knocking At Your Door*, from guitarist John Primer. He’s also played on albums by Bernard Allison, Larry Garner, Big Daddy Kinsey, Deitra Farr, Big Time Sarah, Michael Coleman, Harvey Mandel, among others and has recorded a number of television jingles as well as music for August Wilson’s Tony Award winning play *7 Guitars* for the original Broadway production and for the subsequent 2006 Signature Theater production.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

The Matthew Skoller Band is a highly skilled, highly professional organization with extensive regional touring experience, gigs at prestigious national venues, and national and international festival appearances. For the last 35 years, Matthew Skoller performed regularly at Buddy Guy’s Legends, perhaps the world’s best-known blues club. This helped him build a large and enthusiastic following throughout Chicago, the Midwest and the world. Skoller and crew had an 13-year run every Sunday at the House of Blues in Chicago. He currently is a regular at the iconic Rosa’s Lounge on Chicago’s west side. Other highlights have been performances at the 2012 Montreux Jazz Festival, The Japan Blues Festival in 2012 and 2013, The 2004 Lucerne Blues Festival. The Mawazine World Music Festival in Rabat Morocco in 2006 and again in 2008. Matthew also has performed at numerous festivals and club gigs in England, Italy, Norway, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Greece, Chile, Holland, France, Normandy, Germany, Finland, Israel, China, Estonia, Austria, Lebanon, Bali, Jakarta Indonesia, Bamako Mali. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Yaounde Cameroon. Mauritania and Tunisia.