

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Carrying on the Legacy: Music by Contemporary Piedmont Blues Musicians

Patuxent Music – Patuxent CD-321

Phil Wiggins has been a mainstay of the Washington, DC–area acoustic blues scene since the mid-1970s, as a harmonica player in the Piedmont tradition and as an instructor (see **LB** #234). Recently Wiggins completed a book with Frank Matheis about his life, times, and the culture surrounding him titled ***Sweet Bitter Blues—Washington’s Real Homemade Blues***, forthcoming from University Press of Mississippi in 2020. As a companion piece to their book, Matheis has also produced an album called ***Carrying on the Legacy: Music by Contemporary Piedmont Blues Musicians***.

As the title suggests, the 20 recordings collected here are all by modern artists with various links to Piedmont as well as to other forms of traditional blues. Wiggins himself appears on four tracks: solo on his brisk *Harmonica Rag*; with his ensemble the Chesapeake Sheiks on a smoking instrumental version of *Struttin’ with Some Barbecue*; with Lauren Sheehan, a Portland, Oregon–based singer, guitarist, and alumna of the Centrum Port Townsend Acoustic Blues Workshop (where Wiggins is a teacher) on the wistful *Weepin’ Willow Blues*; and blowing train-whistle harp

Carrying On The Legacy

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An accompanying song collection to the book “Sweet Bitter Blues” by Phil Wiggins and Frank Matheis, University Press of Mississippi

licks on Australian guitarist Dom Turner’s driving take of *Last Fair Deal Gone Down*.

Other standout performers and tracks include Eleanor Ellis; another longtime player on the DC scene, her gentle picking and sweet, low voice on *Trouble I Once Knew* are quietly moving. Virginia-native Rick Franklin’s fleet fretwork and breezy singing on the sly *You Can’t Get That Stuff No More* are delightful. Guitarist and singer Warner Williams and harmonica player Jay Summerour display their simpatico musical chemistry on *I Got the Blues So Bad* and *I Ain’t Gonna Pick No More Cotton*; Valerie and Benedict Turner of Piedmont Bluz do the same on *C.C. Rider* and *Trouble I’ve Had It All My Days*.

An essential snapshot of contemporary mid-Atlantic blues, ***Carrying On the Legacy*** shows that the music is not only surviving, but thriving.

—Melanie Young