



THE JEFF GOLUB BAND featuring HENRY BUTLER THREE KINGS

Versatile and dynamic guitarist Jeff Golub doesn't think about categories, labels or popularity when it comes to music. Instead, his major concern is something far more basic: honesty. "I love all kinds of music and I really only look at one thing when it comes to any style or type: if it truly comes from the heart. If it does, then it's something I can embrace and really enjoy. If it doesn't, I don't care what you want to call it, it doesn't resonate with me."

Golub's musical background is rich and diverse. It includes seven years, five world tours and four albums with Rod Stewart, another seven LPs and three world tours with Billy Squier before pursuing a career as a solo artist. Golub studied at Berklee, and was a member of the James Montgomery Blues Band while in Boston.

Long before either his student days or his time in New York City as a successful bandleader and session player, Golub's earliest musical heroes were country artists.

"I used to hear the Grand Ole Opry on the radio as a kid and later saw some of the country artists like Porter Wagoner and Webb Pierce," Golub, who was born in Copley, Ohio, said. "When I saw some of those suits I thought those guys were outrageous. But then I heard some of the guitarists playing behind them and really got hooked on those chords. Those were the first chords that I learned as a guitarist. So when the British Invasion bands got popular, especially the Beatles, I was ahead of the curve."

Things really turned around for Golub while in his teens when he heard Wes Montgomery. "Listening to Wes was a whole new experience. That sound and his dexterity got me hooked on jazz. I decided I wanted to be a jazz musician and that's why I ended up going to study at Berklee. While I had learned about those country chords I also really got into the blues. So all those things kind of came together during my time in Boston, and then I thought I was ready to head to New York and become a jazz guitarist."

Yet his career took another different turn during his early years in New York City. "I heard that Billy Squier was holding auditions and looking for a guitarist," Golub said. "So I went to the audition and he was really impressed, I learned something during my time with him, namely that I really enjoyed doing rock as well as jazz and that I could still do some imaginative things within that classic rock structure. While Golub got plenty of notoriety during his time with Squier, it was his years with Stewart (1988-1995) that really elevated his profile within the mainstream music community. Golub's fiery playing on the DVD "One Night Only" at Royal Albert Hall got him rave notices in several rock publications. Golub has high praise for Stewart's abilities and musical knowledge.

"He's the real deal," Golub said. "There would be times when we would be going over songs and we'd have some differences in terms of how the song should work. Then he'd start singing and I

would be so blown away that I'd eventually just tell him, go ahead and sing it like you want to and I'll find a way to fit in what I want to do. He's an exceptional performer, and a very open one. The years with him were very special."

Golub's been in New York for decades and met a host of marvelous musicians. But one whom he puts in the upper echelon of anyone he's known or worked with is the piano wizard (and ace photographer, although blinded by glaucoma since birth) Henry Butler. Nicknamed "The Pride of New Orleans" by Dr. John (and featured on HBO's "Treme") Butler's brilliant piano work fuses every element in the Crescent City canon from barrelhouse and the blues to evocative gospel, flashy jazz and the rolling backbeat and syncopation that Jamaican musicians utilized in creating reggae. "Henry is such an exceptional person and musician," Golub interjects. "He's the type of person that pumps you up when you're around him and who plays so well it energizes everyone else in the band. He's someone I'm thrilled to have met and be working with and when he was part of my band on a cruise I knew that I wanted to make a band record, rather than just do a collection of songs and have a lot of guest stars come in and out."

A 1974 Michigan State University grad, Butler received the school's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2009, the same year that he moved to New York from Colorado. Like many native residents of New Orleans, Butler relocated after Hurricane Katrina's devastating impact. His eventual arrival in New York and subsequent union with Golub has proven ideal for Golub's forthcoming release "Three Kings," a tribute work to the music of Albert, B.B. and Freddie King.

"When you look at the modern blues and rock vocabulary, it's almost impossible for anyone to play something that doesn't reflect their influence somehow," Golub said in discussing the album. "Whether you're talking about Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jeff Beck, anyone you can name, they are directly or indirectly influenced by something that one of them did or played. Their songs are timeless and, while they also certainly had their influences, the impact of their work is unquestioned." It's this desire to pay homage to the greats, coupled with the opportunity to showcase a great band that also includes Josh Dion on drums and vocals, Andy Hess (Gov't Mule) on bass and features Butler in both an instrumental and vocal capacity, that makes "Three Kings" a standout.

Highlights include Butler singing with edge and distinction on "Oh Pretty Woman," and providing some spectacular solos on "Born Under A Bad Sign" and "Let The Good Times Roll." Dion's vocals soar on "Help The Poor" and "Everyday I Have The Blues." Special guest Robben Ford delivers a blazing performance on "Side Tracked," while Sonny Landreth brings some Louisiana cool and sizzle to "In Plain Sight." Meanwhile it's Golub's immaculate phrasing, backing and overall leadership that provide both the foundation and unifying force that makes "Three Kings" much more than another trip down memory lane.

"Other than some minimal overdubbing we played it live and tried to keep it sounding fresh and spontaneous," Golub concluded. "That's pretty much the way the band sounds live and we wanted to capture that quality on the record."

"The big thing that I've learned over the years is that if you make good music people will hear it and find you. That's my concern today, not whether something can get on the radio or if it's deemed marketable or fits the profile and definition of what someone says is jazz or blues or whatever. I'm a music lover and that's what I'll continue to do, play the music I love."

Ron Wynn