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BLUESBLAST

JUNE 1, 2017 ★ ISSUE 11-22

M A G A Z I N E



WAYNE BAKER BROOKS

The First Family of Chicago Blues

— James Joiner, *Esquire*

**CD release
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Featured Blues Review - 6 of 10



AWEK - *Long Distance*

Absilone

www.awekblues.com

14 tracks 54 minutes

AWEK has many people to thank over the course of 20 plus years together. *Long Distance*, their latest album, is a salute to their many influences and their mastery of various blues styles is evident from start to finish. The blues was planted in the United States, and as a French band, AWEK has successfully dug up those roots and reforested the scene with healthy timbers. Although AWEK originated a “long distance,” from the blues homeland, they shorten that physical range by playing like true citizens of the world. Bernard Sellam handles vocals and guitar in a classy fashion without any impurities. Stephane Bertolino makes the harp an irresistible blues temptation. He plays with air sweeping right off of Lake Michigan and can trudge through the swamps of Louisiana without an airboat. Joel Ferron (bass) and Olivier Trebel (drums) keep *Long Distance* awash in timeless grooves.

AWEK seems to know all the best routes to get to the heart of a blues track. This album can be listened to front to back, back to front, or inside out. You could probably even play it backwards and still get the same unmistakable roots quality. All the styles are played with tremendous feel, ease and taste. It’s not an insipid walk through a field museum of blues history; it’s where the exhibits come alive and dance on the other side of the velvet rope. Bernard Sellam’s resonant voice has a jaunty personality and the tracks lay on his vocals like a pillow. Stephane Bertolino is the type of harp player that any traditionalist could admire, and any progressive appreciate. He’s fluid and checks all the boxes of the blues harp inspection. He gets down and dirty with a classic amplified sound, jumps on the chromatic, and then slices off an acoustic chunk of buttery first position.

Long Distance is a nice excursion through all the divergent styles of the blues. If you like to boogie there’s “L.A. Stomp,” if you want to crawl through the bayou, there’s “Scratch Blues,” if you want a shuffle that you can set your watch to, then there’s “Take out Some Insurance.” AWEK tries their hand at a Muddy Waters standard, “Long Distance Call.” It creeps along like a slow car on the L Train with Chicago style piano and harp. One of the other handful of covers is the nicely done “I’m Gonna Hit That Highway.” It’s in the same ballpark as Kim Wilson’s “Don’t Touch Me Baby,” from Tigerman. Bernard Sellam handles the majority of the song writing, and his penmanship really shines on the tracks “Sunny Sunday,” a breezy jazz tinged blues, and the opening number, “Don’t Leave Me All Alone,” which hammers out I chord meditation that is a little dark and a lot of fun. *Long Distance* also has some enjoyable guest spots especially on the jumping “She Moves Me,” from saxophone players Jean-Marc Labbé and Drew Davies. The album closes out with a bang on “Jammin’.” Fred Kaplan and Derek O’Brien join the fun on this swinging instrumental.

Don’t let AWEK’s latest release fly under your radar. They’ve rubbed elbows with blues luminaries over the last 20 years and have a consummate album to show for it. If you put on *Long Distance* you don’t have to worry about skipping songs. It’s the kind of album that you can pick up your guitar or harp and feel like you’re a part of the band. It’s not an attempt to play the blues, your ears will tell you all you need to know.

Reviewer Roberto A. Jackson is a blues fan from Arizona. He enjoys learning about the music, whether he's playing or listening.

For other reviews on our website [CLICK HERE](#)



























































































Briggs Farm Blues Festival

Eric Gales Devon Allman
 Slam Allen Thornetta Davis
 R.L. Boyce & The Cornlickers
 Alexis P. Suter Ministers of Sound
 Joanna Connors Vanessa Collier
 Lonnie Shields Swampcandy
 Clarence Spady Jesse Loewy
 Bobby Kyle Dustin Douglas
 Norman Jackson Band

Best Artist and album 2005 by "Trophées France Blues"

Prix Cognac Blues Passions 2008

Finalist of the International Blues Challenge 2008

POWER BLUES		Novembre / November 2007							Moyenne (0 à 4) Average (0 to 4)
		Luc BRUNOT <i>All blues</i> RCF Corrèze RCF Accords <i>Radio Blues Intense</i> R&A	Francis RATEAU <i>Hot Time</i> Couleurs FM	Xavier BOULANGER <i>Baker Street</i> Radio Menergy	Alain ENJALBERT <i>Maxwell Street</i> Radio Terre Marine	Marc LOISON <i>Sweet Home Chicago</i> Radio 666	Jean-Pierre SAVOUYAUD <i>Viras de Blues</i> Radio MDM	Cédric VERNET <i>Blues Café</i> Couleurs FM	
1	 AWK <i>Burnin' Wire On South Lamar</i> [Mosaic Distribution]								3,43
2	 MONSTER MIKE WELCH <i>Just Like It Is</i> [Dixiefrog]								3,14
3	 BEVERLY GUITAR WATKINS <i>Don't Mess With Miss Watkins</i> [Dixiefrog]								2,86
4	 ROMAN CARTER <i>Never Slow Down</i> [Bong Load]								2,71
5 ex-aequo	 FRUTELAND JACKSON <i>Tell Me What You Say</i> [Electro Fi]								2,57
5 ex-aequo	 POPA CHUBBY <i>Deliveries After Dark</i> [Dixiefrog]								2,57
7	 SPOONFUL <i>It's Tight Like That</i> [Auto-production]								2,29
8	 PHIL BONIN & THE BLUES TECHNICIANS <i>Before I Go</i> [Ouisiti Music]								2,14
9	 JOE BONAMASSA <i>Sloe Gin</i> [Provogue]								1,71
10	 LEADFOOT RIVET <i>Greyboy Blues</i> [Dixiefrog]								1,29
11	 DEBORAH COLEMAN <i>Stop The Game</i> [JSP]								0,71



XROADS

Le POWERBLUES

Mai/May 2010

		Luc BRUNOT <i>All blues</i> RCF Corrèze RCF Accords RCF Puy de Dôme <i>Radio Blues Intense</i> RBA	Francis RATEAU <i>Hot Time</i> Couleurs FM <i>Le Blues Café</i> Couleurs FM	Alain ENJALBERT <i>Maxwell Street</i> Radio Terre Marine	Malika BEN BRAHIM <i>Classic 21 Blues</i> RTBF	Jean-Pierre SAVOUYAUD <i>Virus de Blues</i> Radio MDM	Gérald "GGBluz" TREMLAIS <i>Le Bluz @ GG !</i> W3 Blues Radio	Michel FATON <i>Cross'blues</i> Radio Alpine Meilleure <i>Black Spirit</i> RCF Hautes-Alpes	Moyenne (0 à 4) Average (0 to 4)
1		The MANNISH BOYS <i>Shake For Me</i> [Delta Groove]							3,21
2 ex-aequo		WES MACKEY <i>Beyond Words</i> [Bluesline Music]							3,14
2 ex-aequo		AWEK <i>It's Rollin'</i> [Mosaic Music]							3,14
4		The HOLMES BROTHERS <i>Feed My Soul</i> [Alligator]							3,07
5		RITA CHIARELLI <i>Sweet Paradise</i> [Auto-production]							2,86
6		JOE BONAMASSA <i>Black Rock</i> [Provogue]							2,64
7		DIABEL CISSOKHO / RAMON GOOSE <i>Mansana Blues</i> [Dixiefrog]							2,57
8		XAVIER PILLAC <i>Xavier Pillac Trio Live</i> [Baryton Music]							2,43
9		DAVE MORETTI <i>BLUES REVUE</i> <i>Bluesjob</i> [Auto-production]							2,36
10		PETER NATHANSON <i>A Drinking Man's Friend</i> [Mosaic Music]							2,29

AWEK

It's Rollin'

Mosaic Music

Take a blues band from Toulouse, France, fly them to Austin, Texas, pair them in the studio with Derek O'Brien, Kaz Kazanoff, and Fred Kaplan, serve 'em up a week of Texas bar-be-que, and Awek's *It Rollin'* is an energetic romp through the American music landscape. Awek's four man group features the skilled guitar, strong singing and competent song writing of Bernard Sellam paired with Stephane Bertolino's varied electric harp techniques.

On the opener, "Let's Rock," Sellam growls vocals, Bertolino blows and draws the reeds, Kazanoff propels his lusty tenor, and Kaplan pounds ivories in a shivery, 1950s-style rock 'n' roll. The drive through American music continues on "I Cry All Day Long," Awek's nostalgic, stroll-dance tune. When Awek plays the blues, it's a musical joy ride from Chicago to Texas. "Hush Your Mouth" simmers in a Jimmy Reed-style guitar and high-end acoustic blows. "Walter's Mood" is a rollicking instrumental tribute to Little Walter and his Aces' early Chess records. The lone cover, George "Harmonica" Smith's "Telephone Blues," focuses on Sellam's fat West coast guitar, Bertolino's chromatic, O'Brien's earthy Lone Star guitar, and Kaplan's veteran piano. The six minute, intimate musical conversation offers a fine example of letting the music breathe.

Kaplan trades keys for the richness of the B-3 on "Mind Your Step," layin' the foundation for Bertolino's jazz harmonica approaches and Sellam's Kenny Burrell guitar work. The band replicates T-Bone Walker's style and grace on "Queen Of The Night" and adds Kaz's ultra smooth tenor on "Play With Me," another tune with nostalgic ties to the early R&B of the 1940s.



Gritty Chicago harmonica, assertive, yet stylish guitar, and polished originals which accurately cover American blues styles from Chicago's south side to gritty Texas shuffles to West coast jump make this record by the French band Awek is an international winner

—Art Tipaldi

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AWEK

We met in Toulouse...The following is what Bernard had to tell me about the Blues in France and about himself and Awek.



Bernard Sellam is the leader of the leading French Blues band Awek. I met Bernard through French Blues radio DJ Clive Rawlings, who is originally from the UK writes Richard Newman.

It's the music that takes you somewhere, we live the spirit of the Blues, we live this life, living in the Blues world is very different from life in the south of France.

I first started listening to English bands in the early 70s and the first gig I saw, the first Blues gig was Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry at the Olympia Paris, which is a very big venue, and when I came out, I realize that The Blues was the music I like best.

Paris is close to England and I have seen Eric Clapton many times, I have seen many bands. The 60s was a great time for music, and now I have just realized just what a big time it was. I was studying the guitar when I was 15. Fingerpicking acoustic Folk music, was very big in Europe then.

I have always had my small world, with my special room, with my computer. My guitars, are my best friends. I like the life outside in the south of France. But I also have my own private world of the Blues.

Early on I was fond of West Coast music, bands such as 'The Grateful Dead' and 'Crosby Stills And Nash'. To me that music was not different from The Blues, it was all music.

Then I discovered people like Frank Zappa, but when I wanted to get more serious about music, to become professional, I chose the Blues as the music for me.

When I started out I was just a guitar player, not as singer. I became a singer 20 years ago, because I was upset with singers, because of their egos.

I found it very difficult to work with some of them so I decided I had to sing for myself.

I listened to 'Led Zeppelin', 'Canned Heat' and 'The Yardbirds', who were all playing Blues on some of the tracks they recorded. I am 52 years old, I was born in 1957 and it was hard to know about the Blues when I was young, there was not much information about bands. I then got interested in Jazz and from there, found the Blues of Eric Clapton and Peter Green.

At first I was in a Soul band, it had seven musicians in it, and it was very expensive to run. That is why I decided to form the Blues band Awek, and I asked the guys and they said sure, but we don't know anything about the blues and I said I would teach them. I started my music work in 1995, but I was writing my own stuff.

AWEK

I didn't feel that people would take us seriously if we did not write our own songs.

In the Nineties many clubs were closing, so we decided to make a band inside the Soul band. I had given up playing the Blues for 15 years, but I started again, so that we could get gigs, so that we could get more money!

I used to play them music in the car on the way to gigs, it was our laboratory, and they started to learn about the Blues (We were playing Eric Clapton's, 'Lay Down Sally' and 'Blues Power' and the Ray Charles song 'I Got A Woman' plus Muddy Waters songs. Slowly the guys began to get into the Blues and they started to buy Blues CDs themselves. I also listened to Little Walter with the guys, on those long car trips.

The Blues in France has only emerged in the last 15 years. Now you can get stuff through the Internet and French people can hear it. Now there are many fine Blues bands in France.

Maybe you English people led the Blues life in the 50s and 60s. England caught the blues at a good time, and so did Germany, but here in France we were more isolated.

In France we were a bit apart, there was a big Jazz scene here and there still is. There were very few people doing the Blues in France in the early 70s.

When I started I didn't think it would last long, I was surprised that it carried on, and then I realize that this band Awek, was made for the Blues.

We have played for up to 3000 people. Our latest album was recorded in Austin, Texas. A friend of mine who was a drummer way back, went to live in there. It was while playing the Blues, at the 'Country Blues Cafe', that I met up with my friend, and he suggested that we came to Austin to do the new album. Austin was a good place for us, with a good engineer, he was very professional.

In France I had always to explain to the studio, the kind of sound that I wanted. But that is impossible to explain to someone, because there are so many things that need to be right. There are many good engineers in France, but they really are into pop music. When we went to Austin we didn't have to explain anything to the engineers there, they just knew what to do.

Stuart Solomon an engineer from the studio had his own secret sound, he wouldn't tell me what it was. To make a CD like we did, is a lot of work. We recorded live together, because we did not have much time. We recorded 16 songs, but we didn't use all of them.

We had long talks together in Austin in the studio, we all talked about making music. We also talked to each other about politics and life in general, and we showed each other things on YouTube, we talked about everything!

Awek has a band sound, you have to have your own sound, people come up to us and say how much they liked the sound of the band.

Studio versus Stage.

Many people say we love the CD, but we prefer the band on the stage. This is our second CD recorded in the USA. You have to try to do something different to change the sound on different CDs, it's not easy to do that, because our sound has been evolving for 15 years.

When we went to Austin this time, we decided to have special guests on the album, that's the new album called 'It's Rollin'. I didn't want to go back to Austin for this album, but then we decided to go back. That's why we use special guests, so there would be something different.

Playing Live In France

Paris is not a good place for the Blues, but we have played at a festival in the suburbs of Paris, and these days festivals are the big thing.

There are many festivals in France not only in the big cities, but all over the place, and we like to play them. The festival scene is the big scene in France for Blues bands.

English people are very fond of music. I loved Peter Green's early music when I heard it. Eric Clapton was good, but he was not just a Blues guitar player, he played lots of other styles.

For me Peter Green was the one, he was the Blues guitarist that impressed me the most from the English scene.

My favorite band was BB King and I thought that Peter Green played from his heart, just like BB King, and that he didn't play too many notes on his guitar, again just like BB King. Peter Green just had a big heart.

For more information on Awek and to hear some samples of their new excellent album 'It's Rollin' go to: <http://www.awekblues.com/>

Richard Newman
interviewing Bernard





*Awek really sound great and play what I like...real blues.
Hope to see you again.
Sugar ray Norcia*



Awek is the real deal. There is nobody bettering France to represent this music."
Crossroads n°38



The group's smooth synthesis of classic Texas guitar courtesy of Bernard Sellam, and Delta-influenced Chicago harp, courtesy of Stephane Bertolino, remains one of the most successful sounds of the blues...." -
Soul Bag



Just from the first note on I really enjoyed what I heard. This is nothing but a pure fun record, full of original energy and style. You guys have definitely learned your lessons well. I like your songwriting, I like the cool swing in your blues. I am also very impressed by your personal vocal style. You sound very real, man. And you're playing a mean guitar. The rythm section is tight and right there on the spot. Finally Stephane. He's a talented player with a great tone and technique. I'm sure he will develop his own significant style.
Detlev Hogen Crosscut records (Germany)

Stephen Bertolino is a true master of the blues harmonica but in the end, his virtuosity on the instrument takes a back seat to his real intention... delivering his blues unvarnished... straight to your heart.
Blues Mag n°39



Awek's places near the top of the list of the finest living blues Band. Bernard Sellam Upward-bound voice is of a genuinely handsome quality and he uses it with confidence."
Blues Again

*A blues paradise, a delicious melt of roots soul and Chicago blues.
Every song a delighted BCR*



"If you think genuine Blues music is not being created today, just take a listen to Awek"
Crossroads

AWEK

BURNIN' WIRE ON SOUTH LAMAR

(2007 'Awekblues')

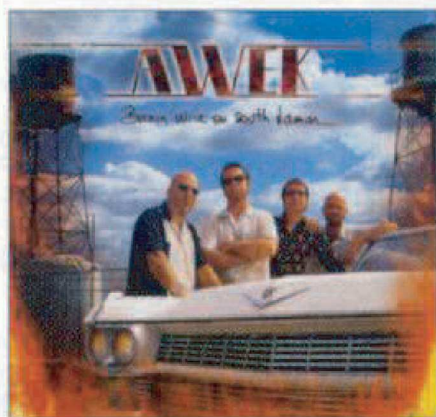
Im April 2007 erfüllte sich die Band aus Toulouse im Süden Frankreichs einen Traum. Sie reiste nach Austin, Texas um dort - unter der Leitung von Stuart Sullivan, dem Toningenieur, der u.a. die erste Fabulous Thunderbirds-LP aufnahm - ihr neues Album einzuspielen. Mit großem Selbstbewusstsein präsentieren die Franzosen dreizehn eigene Titel, die stilistisch eine weite Blues-Bandbreite abdecken. Sänger Bernard Sellam prägt mit seiner ausgezeichneten

Stimme, die manchmal an Tad Robinson erinnert, die Musik der Band. Ich höre Einflüsse aus Texas und Chicago, doch auch jazzige Arrangements, ein wenig Blues aus den Swamps Louisianas. Doch vor allem fasziniert das handwerkliche Können. Der Name mag exotisch klingen, doch AWEK spielen absolut authentisch. Starkes Album. / Recorded by legendary sound engineer Stuart Sullivan in Austin, Texas. Stuart wrote blues history when he recorded the T-Birds' first LP in 1979. The Toulouse, France-based band comes across naturally und sounds better than many of their US contemporaries. The new album presents thirteen originals and one cover. Vocalist Bernard Sellam is one of the best European singers I have heard in a long time. With his full tone and beautiful timbre his vocal style is reminding me of Tad Robinson's. I can hear Texas and Chicago style blues in AWEK's music. There's also some blues from the swamps in Louisiana, and a little jazz-flavored swing. But foremost, this is excellent craftsmanship. The band's name may sound rather weird, but their music is first class. Recommended. BERNARD SELLAM - gtr/voc, STEPHANE BERTOLINO - hca, JOEL FERON - bass, OLIVIER TREBEL - drums.

CD AWEK 1

(65:26/14)

€15.50



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[Awek](#)

Burnin' Wire On South Lamar

Mosiatic Music

[Rate It!](#)

French Blues

Gritty Chicago harmonica, assertive yet stylish guitar, and stylish originals that accurately cover American Blues styles from Chicago's South Side to earthy Texas shuffles to West Coast Jump make this record by the French band **Awek** an international winner. Of the 100 bands competing in the Blues Foundation's International Band Competition held in February this year in Memphis, Awek was one of ten bands that made it to the finals. Though they didn't cop first place, they put on three nights of outstanding music and they have released one of the finest CDs rooted in all forms of American Blues.

Awek features a two-fisted guitar and harmonica attack. The skilled guitar, strong singing, and competent songwriting of **Bernard Sellam** pairs perfectly with **Stephane Bertolino's** varied electric harp techniques. To find the dirt that makes American Blues distinct, Awek traveled to Austin, Texas, in the spring of 2007, added Austin musicians like **Mike Connelly** on keyboards, **Bob Feldman** on guitar, and **Kaz Kazanoff** on tenor sax; ate Texas barbeque; and let the tape roll.

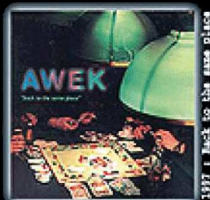
The disc opens with "Don't Call Me Sugar," an earthy Texas shuffle that might easily have been heard at an early **T-Birds** show. As Sellam and Bertolino toss out guitar and harp solos, they are completely dialed into the Lone Star terroir. As a follow-up, they jump the Blues with the flyin' instrumental "Kiki." This has all the energy of their live Memphis gig. All that's missing is watching Sellam's jubilant smile with every inventive string shot. At the same time, Bertolino's howlin' reed workout whips up the intensity until Sellam joins for a simultaneous note-for-note ending. On "I Ain't Gonna Do," a West Coast Blues tune, Awek adds Kazanoff's heavy sax work to Sellam's **William Clarke** vocal approach.

On "Four Times," the band travels to the South Side of Chicago to honor **Muddy**. Here Bertolino gives harp nods to the giants of Chicago Blues harp, like **Little Walter** and **Cotton**. At the same time, the tempo changes and **Jimmy Rogers'** guitar accurately center this in the Windy City tradition. Awek's American music travelogue travels down Highway 61 to Memphis on the Rock 'n' Rollin' "Can't Get Enough." And that's the essence of Awek's record, *"I can't get enough."*

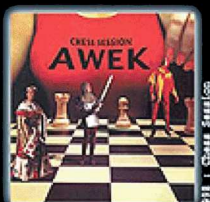
The record continues with more Texas grit on **Jimmy Reed's** "You Don't Have To Go," "Easy Money," "Big Leg Woman," and "I'll Pay Your Train Fare," with Bertolino showin' off his **Sonny Boy** acoustic swoops and swells. They also accurately recreate Chicago sounds with "Come Back Baby" and jumpin' West Coast party music on the supercharged chromatic harp and fat toned guitar instrumental "Yes Sir Yes Sir."

Awek is another fine example of the serious dedication to American Blues that European musicians feel. There is nothing second rate here. Led by polished songwriting and first class musicianship, Awek is worth searching out.

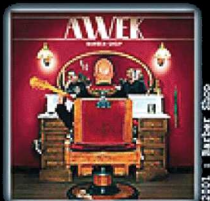
Art Tipaldi is a senior contributing editor at BluesWax. You may contact Art at blueswax@visnat.com.



1997 : Back to the same place



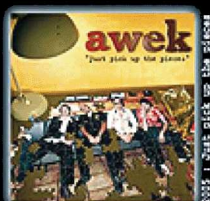
1998 : Chess Session



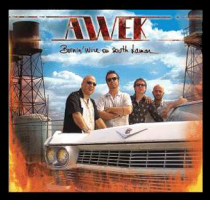
2000 : Burnin' Wire



2004 : Kaz



2005 : Just pick up the pieces



AWEK

With 6 albums and 13 years' experience behind them, Awek have acquired a strength and maturity worthy of their peers on the other side of the Atlantic.

Awek play an authentic blues, echoing the juke joints and smoky bars of Jackson, Mississippi. But at the same time, a personal and multicoloured blues, light-years away from dull facsimiles.

Understandably elected in France best blues group in 2004, the group have performed in Europe and North America .

Their 5th cd's, "Just pick up the pieces", has been elected (French) Blues album of the year 2005.

Their reputation and experience have led the group to Austin, Texas where in April 2007 they recorded "Burnin' wire on south Lamar" with Stuart Sullivan , well-known for his work with Kim Wilson, Jimmy Vaughan etc

A little help from a few of Austin's musical luminaries such as Mark "Kaz" Kazanoff, "Mr Blues Sax" himself and Nick Connely (Delbert McClinton, Fabulous Thunderbirds) on a number of tracks and "Burnin' Wire on South Lamar" can lay claim to being one of the best blues offerings

This last release is definitely the most accomplished and mature yet, coming close to the state of grace.

You never emerge unscathed, when, one ebony black night, you cross the path of Awek and their tribal blues.

"Awek sound great and play what I like...real blues." Sugar Ray Norcia

Major festivals

- Montreal International Jazz Festival (Québec)
- Tremblant International Blues Festival (Québec)
- IBC Memphis (USA)
- Cahors Blues Festival (France)
- Porretta Soul (Italy)
- Nou Barris Blues (Barcelona/Spain)
- Blues & Jazz Rally (Luxembourg)
- Jazz à Liège (Belgium)
- Cognac Blues Passion (France)
- Blues Sur Seine (Paris)

Contact <http://www.myspace.com/awekblues>
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bernardsellam@free.fr - (33)612 17 39 23