

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY BLUES



The **Vipers** Featuring **DEB CLEVELAND**

For nearly 30 years The Vipers have been entertaining fans in the Pacific Northwest and Europe. These veteran musicians mix an intoxicating brew of Chicago and Delta blues, funky R&B, and New Orleans rhythms that will bring you out of your seat and onto the dance floor. The Vipers is comprised of Deb Cleveland (vocals) Jon Silvermoon (vocals, harmonica), Johnny "Guitar" Ward (guitar), Russ Whitlach (bass), and Pete "The Beat" Burger (drums).

The band is a past winner of the Eugene Weekly Reader's poll as *Best Local Blues Band* and Deb has won twice as *Best Local Blues Personality* and once as *Female Vocalist*. She has also won the Rainy Day Blues Society's Rooster Award for *Female Blues Vocalist*.

Deb Cleveland has been with the band since late 2002 and is featured on the CD *Tickle My Toes*. She toured Europe with the band including an appearance at Sweden's Linköping Blues and Jazz Festival. Currently the band is working on a new CD.

Originally the band featured the incendiary guitar work of the late Canned Heat guitarist Henry Vestine from the band's inception in 2002 until Vestine's untimely death in 1997. From 1997 to 2002 the band featured veteran bluesman Eagle Park Slim, several of whose original songs are on the CD *Good Times Live!*.

The Vipers have performed at numerous festivals including The Waterfront Blues Festival, the Eugene Celebration, the Salem Art Fair and Festival, the Willamette Valley Folk Festival, the Oregon Country Fair, and the Linköping Jazz and Blues Festival (Sweden). Their European tours have taken them to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Belgium, and The Netherlands.

Born and raised in east Waco, Texas, Deb Cleveland first began to sing in her Sunday School Southern Baptist gospel choir. Whenever Deb's mother cleaned house she would play the blues, exposing Deb to Bobby Blue Bland, Johnny Taylor, B.B. King, Jimmy Reed, and many others. She was always singing and kind of prayed that way with gospel hymns, "like breathing air." Deb and her mother used to go and listen to the different gospel choirs in the area. Her father was in the Air Force. He played harmonica and sang blues and gospel spirituals in a deep baritone voice.

Deb's grandmother sang in church and played piano at home. Every Sunday, after listening to her grandmother play a hymn or two at home, Deb would persuade her to play Boogie Woogie on the piano, much to her mother's dismay. To this day Deb loves Boogie Woogie.

Deb moved to Phoenix, Arizona at age six. Her parents ruled the radio at home. Then Deb got the first transistor radio on her block and a world of music opened to her. She listened to everything from the gospel of the Mighty Clouds of Joy and Shirley Caesar to the rock of The Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. She listened to Motown, The Supremes, Martha Reeves and The Vandellas, Wilson Pickett, and quite a bit of Perry Como and Dean Martin. As a little girl Dinah Washington was her favorite. Then at age 11 she was crushed when her mother would not let her go see Tina Turner at the Calderon Ballroom, a local bar. To this day Deb says she still has some issues with that.



The Vipers

Featuring
DEB CLEVELAND



(continued from other side)

By 15 her mother thought Deb was incorrigible. So she sent her to live with relatives in Salem, Oregon. By 16 Deb was more or less on her own. She got pregnant, earned her GED, worked in a plywood mill, became a custodian and spent the next ten years working various jobs and partying. In 1985, when in her 30s, she went to the University of Oregon in Eugene and got a Bachelor's degree in Human Services. She was encouraged to take a "fun" class and auditioned for the University gospel ensemble. To her surprise the instructor, Jack Gaynor, said she had potential. Until then Deb had never thought of herself as a singer. Within three or four years Deb was doing solos with the ensemble. She joined a local band, Willie Dee and Shakabuku, and played congas and sang backup. Then one evening she sang lead for the first time and was amazed with the audience's response.

Deb went to graduate school in Social Work at Portland State University where she became friends with Judy Vogelsang and sang harmonies in Judy's band, Everybody and Their Uncle. Marty Weissbrath, the band's saxophonist, was impressed by Deb's voice and asked her to sing with another small group. That led to the formation of the Deb Cleveland Band in 1994 and their 1998 release, *Live! All Night Long*. A song from that CD appeared on the Eugene Blues anthology CD, and in his review Real Blues editor Andy Grigg praised Cleveland as a "big voiced" vocalist who "deserves to be on a big label."

Deb would occasionally sit in with The Vipers. When the band needed a new lead singer. Deb stepped up. Together they soon produced *Tickle My Toes*, a CD including songs by Ida Cox, Memphis Minnie, Big Maybelle, Mighty Joe Young, Albert Collins, and Muddy Waters, as well as original tunes by Jon Silvermoon and an original tune by Deb that gave the CD its title. The band is currently working on a new CD.

JON SILVERMOON

Jon Silvermoon began playing harmonica in 1971. In 1992 he founded The Vipers with his good friend the late Henry Vestine, guitarist with Canned Heat. They collaborated on The Vipers' first CD, *Venom*, released in 1993 and played together throughout Oregon until Henry's passing in October 1997. *Good Times Live!* with Eagle Park Slim was released in in 2000. In his review of that CD Tom Hyslop of *Blues Revue* wrote that "Silvermoon blows a sometimes teasing, sometime bonecrushing harp."

JOHN WARD

Guitarist for The Vipers is Johnny "Guitar" Ward. A long-time veteran of the Eugene blues scene, he has played with The Party Kings, The Allnighterz, and Li'l Lynne and the Smokin' Soles. In his review of *Good Times Live!*, Greg Johnson of the Cascade Blues Association wrote that it was John's "performance on *Claustrophobia Blues* that made a believer out of me, with it's low-down, slow-burn riffs that simply cry out the blues."

RUSS WHITLACH - Bass

Bass player Russ Whitlach has played with Rose de Lima, RMS McConnell, Xstatic, and Midnight Rodeo among many bands. Russ's inspirations on bass include Rocco Prestia from Tower of Power and David Schallock from Sons of Champlin.

PETE "THE BEAT" BURGER - Drums

Rounding out The Vipers' rhythm section is Pete "The Beat" Burger. Pete started playing drums when he was a kid in the 1960's. He has an uncanny knack for never over or under-playing, even at very low volumes. He's always unerringly right there on the beat and intuitively seems to sense dynamic changes as they happen. Pete has played with who's who of regional and national blues artists including Carey Bell, Chuck Berry, Hubert Sumlin, Cephas and Wiggins, and James Cotton.

House Rockin' With All The Soul And Power Of The Blues!