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# Reviews

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## Living Blues Magazine

Trenton, New Jersey, isn't often considered to be a blues hot spot. However, the deft musicianship and outstanding ensemble playing featured on Joe Zook & Blues Deluxe's **Good Mornin' Blues** demonstrates that the Garden State indeed has plenty of soul. As a bandleader, guitarist, and vocalist, Joe Zook is nothing if not generous. Keyboards and a tightly arranged three-piece horn section are an essential part of the band's sound, and each tune gives the musicians plenty of room to stretch out.

*I Love My Baby* sports a swinging arrangement that nicely showcases the band's outstanding chemistry. The horn section (Steve Kaplan on tenor and baritone sax, Danny Tobias on trumpet, and Angelo DiBraccio on alto sax) is in rare form, and soulful organ riffs from John Sopko flesh out the sound. Zook's gruff vocals and sweet, B.B. King-inspired guitarwork cut right through the mix. Fleetfingered piano work from James Cheadle adds spice to *It Ain't What You Do*, while the lyrics offer a glimpse of Zook's philosophical side. "It ain't what you do / it's who you're doing it to," he muses on the refrain. A pair of cover tunes gives bassist Bill Holt the chance to handle the vocals. Fleecie Moore's *Caldonia* is a familiar warhorse, but high-powered musicianship and sheer exuberance make the band's performance feel fresh and inspired. A reading of Don Nix's *Same Old Blues* is a wonderful showcase for Holt's vocal chops, and Zook gets plenty of room to stretch out on guitar.

The best tracks on *Good Mornin' Blues* stir touches of soul and jazz into the band's musical mix. The smoldering minor key workout *Take Me Back* features some of the album's tightest horn charts, and Cheadle's atmospheric keyboard work adds a distinctive 1970s vibe. Showstopper *I Got Nothin' to Say* mines a similar vein. Holt's bass and Jeff Snelson's drums lock into an airtight groove, while Zook's guitarwork features some tasty Wes Montgomery-style octaves. Cheadle's ability to work a Fender Rhodes is simply jawdropping. Joe Zook has assembled an extraordinary team of musicians, and every track on *Good Mornin' Blues* beautifully showcases their talent. Let's hope the blues world hears a lot more music from Joe Zook & Blues Deluxe. —**Jon Kleinman**

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## Big City Rhythm and Blues Magazine

**Guitarist /singer Joe Zuccarello** has been entertaining East Coast blues audiences for decades. The Trenton, New Jersey musician was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 2013. **Good Mornin' Blues** is the latest from Joe Zook & Blues Deluxe. The ten tracks on the album include eight Zook originals with styles range from rockin' blues, straight ahead Chicago blues and jump blues with some jazz influences as well.

The recording kicks off with a barrage of unaccompanied screaming riffs leading into the title track, a basic 12 bar with some jazz-informed piano work by James Cheadle culminating with an upper register slide solo by Zook. A three-piece horn section appears on seven of the songs, starting with *I Love My Baby*, which has a nice tenor sax solo followed by a Jimmy Smith-inspired solo on the Hammond B3 organ by John Sopko.



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*Big City Rhythm and Blues, continued*

The horn arrangements are tasty throughout and lend some great padding to the tracks. The Louis Jordan cover, *Caldonia*, is a highlight with solos by Angelo DiBraccio on alto, Steve Kaplan on baritone sax, Danny Tobias on trumpet, and not to be outdone, Tony Buford on harmonica.

The band is really swinging now, great job by drummer Jeff Snelson and bassist Bill Holt, who sings this jump blues classic. The rocking *It Ain't What You Do* has some more great piano work by Cheadle and Zook shines again with his very melodic and pinpoint slide playing. On *On My Mind*, the lyric strays from the usual blues concerns and mentions some foreign policy issues the USA has to deal with. On the standard *Same Old Blues*, DiBraccio shines again on the alto. The closer, *I Got Nothing To Say*, starts with some clean minor chord strumming by Zook and features an electric piano solo by James Cheadle that gives the track a 70's fusion feel. As always, the horn chart is unobtrusive but effective. The musicians seem to have a lot of familiarity with each other and the playing is always confident and well-schooled, for lack of a better word. Let's hope to hear more from Joe Zook & Blues Deluxe in the near future! – **Bob Monteleone**

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Blues Blast  
Magazine

## **I got dem ole' Trenton, New Jersey blues again, Mama!,**

a review of Joe Zook & Blues Deluxe's Good Mornin' Blues

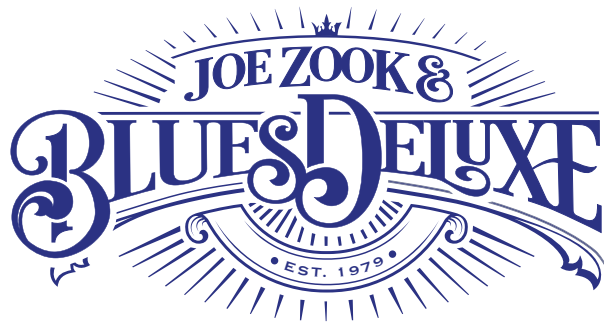
by Greg "Bluesdog" Szalony

**I got dem ole' Trenton, New Jersey blues again, Mama!** I finally get to cover a blues a band from my home town. Joe Zook (Joe Zuccarello) & Blues DeLuxe have been a mainstay of the East Coast blues scene for decades and with the strong musicality of this release it is no wonder.

A few years back I got the chance to see them open the Saturday show of The Riverfront Blues Festival in Wilmington, Delaware. They are just as solid here as they were live. Joe leads the pack with his authentic blues guitar and husky vocals, as well as writing eight of the ten songs.

Every musician here is top rate. The rhythm section of drummer Jeff Snelson and bass player Bill Holt create a full bottom. Bill's bass is more upfront than usual for a blues band. Just under the surface his meandering bass lines add to the groove. Jeff provides a full sound on his drums. James Cheadle's piano playing harkens back to some of the greats of the blues. John Sopko is certainly no slouch as he contributes jazzy Hammond B3 organ on three tracks. Tony Buford adds his harmonica to great affect on three tracks as well.

*Blues Blast, continued on next page*



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*Blues Blast, continued*

Did I mention the horn section? Great Googily-Moogily these guys are tighter than a bull's...um...part that he sits on. Angelo DiBraccio on alto sax, Steve Kaplan on tenor and baritone saxes and Danny Tobias on trumpet are a powerhouse as they play in unison to drive the songs along. Their solos are well crafted works of art. Danny is a local gift to jazz trumpet. I've had the pleasure of witnessing his spot-on playing numerous times at The 1867 Sanctuary concert series in Ewing Township. I'm not previously familiar with the two other guys, but all three are superb.

**Good Mornin' Blues** is kicked off with a blazing guitar run to get this chugging number going. The lyrics are an amalgamation of standard blues lines ('whiskey & wimmin', 'blues fall down like rain') and more modern references ('ET' or acid rain). It all works just fine. Joe adds slide guitar over his regular part towards the end of the song and James Cheadle works his magic on the "eighty-eights". Tony flavors it up with his harmonica skills. A walking bass line underpins the horn-fired *I Love My Baby*.

For my money Joe delivers his tastiest guitar on *Wait And See* as he ponders what happens when he makes a full go round (deadsville). Great horns, piano and organ here as well. Jump blues guitar and the horn section in its' finest moment as Bill Holt contributes his powerful vocal on this strong rendition of Louis Jordan's classic *Caldonia*. The members of the horn section along with guitar, harmonica and organ all take solos. The slow paced *Where Did It Go* is about fleeting nature of time. Nice trumpet solo on this one.

Band members chime in on vocals behind Joe on *It Ain't What You Do*, a lesson in humanity featuring some nifty slide work. The tenuous world situation is the subject of *On My Mind* as North Korea, Russia, Mexico and the old U.S.A. are pondered. Big Franky adds his mandolin and Joe provides electric guitar and acoustic slide. Bill Holt returns for his second vocal spot on the Don Nix composition *Same Old Blues*, a song done by Freddie King and Gatemouth Brown among others. A funky Doobie Brothers-like guitar intro starts off the equally funky *I Got Nothin' To Say* that features the inimitable James Cheadle on jazzy electric piano to end the proceedings.

From the clean production by Ernie White and Joe Zook to the fine musicianship and vocalists it's all here ladies and gentlemen. Home town boys that keep on keepin' on. Slap some Trenton pork roll on the grill and give this puppy a spin!

**by Greg "Bluesdog" Szalony**



# Reviews

## *Good Mornin' Blues (2019)* Joe Zook & Blues DeLuxe



### The Band

**Joe Zook** - Guitars/Vocals

**Bill Holt** - Bass, (Vocals on tracks 4, 9)

**Jeff Snelson** - Drums

**James Cheadle** - Keyboards

**John Sopko** - Hammond B3 Tracks 2, 3, 9

**Angel DiBraccio** - Alto Saxophone

**Steve Kaplan** - Tenor & Baritone Saxophones

**Danny Tobias** - Trumpet

**Tony Buford** - Harmonica Tracks 1, 4, 7

**Tim Hunt** - Equipment & Live Sound Engineer

**Big Franky** - Mandolin, track 8

Produced by Joe Zuccarello and Ernie White

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Art Direction, Logo, Design, Website: TonyBuford Creative (tonybuford.com)

Photography: Gary Saretzky, Kevin Mulrane, Brian McCarthy, Tony Buford

Horn Arrangements: Steve Kaplan, Angelo DiBraccio

Mastering: Suha Gur

Supplemental support, rehearsal and copyright CDs - Frank Pinto, The Music Room

Rhythm section, keyboard, and Hammond B3 tracks engineered by  
Tom Reock, Squirrel Ranch Studios, 129 Philips Ave., White Horse, NJ, (609) 581-5375

Overdubs, guitars, horns, harmonica, and vocals engineered by  
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