



# Ladies laying down the licks

Sue Foley talks guitar women, the '70s, and happily letting the blues inside **musicpreview**

## Guitar Women

With Sue Foley, Ellen McIlwaine, Rachele Van Zanten, Roxanne Potvin, and Romi Mayes  
Friday, 5 October at 8pm  
Myer Horowitz

PAUL BLINOV  
Arts & Entertainment Editor

If asked to name a guitarist on the spot, most people would have no trouble whizzing through the great ones. Hendrix; Van Halen; Page; the masculine surnames would spew forth effortlessly from person after person. But would anyone name a woman? Most probably wouldn't, and Sue Foley's looking to change that.

The Canadian blues-mistress—and winner of an astonishing 17 Maple Blues Awards—has banded together with four other female guitarists to highlight her gender's often overlooked contributions to the six-string world on with the Guitar Women tour. Not that she's got anything against the upstanding gentlemen of rock, mind you.

"A lot of people have seen a lot of guys play, and it's great, [but] I personally think that women have a unique message with their guitar playing, and I think it's really nice to hear that," Foley explains over the phone.

"I grew up in a guitar playing family; my father played, and my brothers played," she continues. "I also grew up in the '70s. It was a real guitar culture: the era of Hendrix and Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton. There was just a lot of guitar in music, and it seeped into my subconscious, for sure, because when I picked [a guitar] up, I just knew I was made for it. And, I wanted to play like those guys, not like the women I'd see."

The Guitar Women show originally started off as a book; after discovering that no existing page-turner covered the contributions of women to blues music, Foley took it upon herself to record their stories. She began interviewing as many female artists as she could find, penning a series of essays on the matter as well.

Despite the number of femme-guitarists she spoke to, when Foley decided to start a tour, she had no trouble zeroing in on the four women

she wanted to join her.

"Rachele, Ellen, and I have done some work in the past together, so we're familiar with each other and each other's styles, and I like the way we were able to melt our show together," Foley says. "And then Roxanne Potvin and I have been on the road most of this year in another guitar women show called 'Blues Guitar Women,' which has been through Europe and US.

"So Roxanne and I were really familiar, and it was easy to get her on the show. We all did a show together in Ottawa in November last year, the four of us. Then Romi Mayes got added [after] Rachele couldn't make a couple of the first dates."

Each of them is successful in their own right, but together, Foley hopes they can maybe give some audiences the same kind of experience that blues music originally gave her.

"I was just moved by it," she says. "I had an epiphany at a show when I was very young, and the music got inside of me. I can't really explain it; there's just something about really good blues that gets inside of you. If you open up your soul, and the blues walks in—that's just what happens."



## albumreview

**Bionic**  
*Black Blood*  
Virgin Records

TONY KESS  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

With a name like Bionic, an album titled *Black Blood*, and cover art consisting solely of menacing black shapes against a blood-red background, it would seem safe to assume that the members of this Montreal-based group are expert purveyors of some pretty terrifying black metal.

However, that assumption would be totally wrong; Bionic is more akin to hard rock bands such as Queens of the Stone Age, Built to Spill, and McClusky than they are to Bathory or Mayhem. Assisted by veteran members of the Montreal indie rock scene such as Tricky Woo and Silver Mount Zion,

Bionic busts out hook-laden, guitar-heavy stoner-rock.

But despite such guest appearances from other members of the Montreal music community, *Black Blood* suffers from a severe lack of creativity: Bionic seems content to wallow in the same overused power chords, hollow posturing, and '70s-rock-revivalist territory that have already been covered by contemporaries with much more skill and innovation.

While *Black Blood* will prove an enjoyable listen for any fan of weed-rock, punk, or metal, in the end, maybe a death-metal release would have been a little more challenging, if not more exciting, for everyone involved.



## albumreview

**The Birthday Massacre**  
*Walking with Strangers*  
Metropolis/Repo

BEN CARTER  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

On *Walking With Strangers*, the newest album from Toronto's The Birthday Massacre, there is, to put it lightly, a lot going on. Industrial, new

wave, and orchestral pop all combine on this disc—unfortunately, it's all a little too much to take in.

Hidden beneath the overbearing,

awkward production and the plodding, industrial guitars are some charming melodies and some quality dramatic elements. The vocals are adventurous and sound strong enough, but neither they nor the lyrics are particularly memorable. Certain songs, particularly "Kill the Lights," are brisk and enjoyable, but they are few and far between, and the fleeting subtle touches aren't nearly enough.

What's left is a record that sounds like "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure," but in band-form. More industrial though, and not the Wyld Stallyns. We should be so lucky.

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