



## **A Friends of The Duck *Exclusive***

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## **5 Minutes with... Jack De Keyzer**

Appearing at The Duck Blues Matinee  
on Saturday, November 21, 2009

*Friends of The Duck: First of all congratulations on being voted Great Canadian Blues Artist of 2009, Jack.*

Jack De Keyzer: Thank you.

*FoD: You're a hard man to get a hold of. What have you been up to lately?*

JDK: I've been pretty busy playing the usual gigs and I've been in the studio finishing the mixing of a live CD that had to be delivered by the Juno deadline, which was on Friday [November 13]. We'll know in March if it gets a nomination in the blues category.

*FoD: Can you tell us a bit about the CD?*

JDK: It was sort of unplanned in a way. A friend of mine recorded us several times at a club in Hamilton called The Corktown. Usually I use those live recordings as references to see what we're doing wrong and what we're doing right. One of the nights turned out really great so I thought, I wouldn't mind mixing this and see where it goes.

*FoD: I guess you liked what you heard if you decided to release it as an album.*

JDK: I liked what I heard enough to at least see if the songs were worth pursuing further. As I started getting into the different tracks, I thought, wow, this really does sound like an

album to me. It sounds like a really good representation of what our band sounds like on a good night, which is not that easy to get sometimes.

*FoD: Who's on the album with you?*

JDK: Al Duffy on bass, David McMorrow plays organ and piano, and we had Danny Lockwood on drums. They're all great guys and excellent players, one of the best lineups I've ever hit the stage with. Al Cannon did the recording. He is doing some work with Daniel Lanois and is an excellent engineer.

*FoD: Are there any previously unrecorded songs on the album?*

JDK: No, it's basically our live club set consisting of tunes from all of my albums, plus some classic R&B and blues tunes.

*FoD: What's the new CD going to be called and when is it slated for release?*

JDK: We're calling it The Corktown Sessions. I'm hoping to get it out in the beginning of December.

*FoD: Of all your CDs do you have a favourite?*

JDK: Not really. They all represent different marker points in my career.

*FoD: Were you surprised when you won the Juno Award for Blues Album of the Year with 6 String Lover in 2003?*

JDK: Not totally. It was a strong album and I was on the short list. I felt pretty confident I had a winner, but until they make the announcement you're kind of on the edge. When it comes to things like that there is always some element of surprise. I had previously been nominated for Blues Album of the Year with Down in the Groove in 2001, and then again after for Blues Thing in 2007. Those didn't win, although Down in the Groove had taken the Blues Album of the Year at the Maple Blues Awards in 2000.

*FoD: How do you like working in the studio as a producer with other blues artists?*

JDK: I love it. Anything to do with music is good for me. I enjoy getting the creative thing happening and help other artists get their vision and sound down on CD. Ultimately it's about doing the best job you can do and see what happens. When you make other people sound good you make yourself sound good.

*FoD: Do you produce artists in other genres?*

JDK: No, just blues.

*FoD: When did you know you had a calling to play the blues?*

JDK: As a kid back in England I always wanted to play music and I started playing the guitar when I was ten. I kinda got the music bug from Cliff Richard and The Shadows. Then a few years later, when my family had just moved to Canada, The Beatles, The Stones and The Animals came out. That's how I actually got introduced to R&B and blues music, because they covered tunes by some of the great American blues artists. Of course I didn't know that until later, when I started playing with older guys who knew the score and they'd say hey, that's not a Rolling Stones song that's a Muddy Waters song. Or you gotta listen to the Marvin Gaye version of this Beatles song.

*FoD: So I guess like most of us who've been around for a few years you became a blues fan of the real deal through the British Invasion bands that made it popular.*

JDK: Exactly. Once I heard the real stuff and got hooked on it, I went down the path of learning blues songs and getting behind that kind of music. And this with the thought that if Clapton and The Beatles, and all those different acts who were influenced by these roots people, could make their own sound, I could let that same influence help me to create my own sound too.

*FoD: And as they say, the rest is history.*

JDK: Yeah, it was a gradual progression. There was a band in Hamilton, where I grew up after leaving England, called Son Richard and the Chessmen that I took notice of, because they played Chess blues. A few years later those guys had a hit on the radio as King Biscuit Boy.

*FoD: You ended up playing with King Biscuit Boy not long after, didn't you?*

JDK: I think it was about four years later. By the time I was eighteen I was already a pretty good guitar player and I was presented with the opportunity to work with Biscuit Boy. Since then I've had a chance to play with a lot of the best blues people in Canada. It's been a great ride.

*FoD: How would you compare the Canadian blues scene then to what it is now?*

JDK: Blues has ebbs and flows like most things but obviously it has been continuously growing through the years. When I started working with Biscuit Boy and Ronnie Hawkins in the seventies, we rarely played in the smaller towns. We always played in places like Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and London. It's only been in the last ten years or so that I have been doing a lot of shows in smaller towns, which is an indication that the blues has spread far and wide.

*FoD: What kind of music do you listen to at home?*

JDK: Blues, R&B and jazz are my favourite but I like pretty well any kind of music. I don't care what genre it is as long as it's done well. Louis Armstrong said 'there's good

music and there's bad music,' I just try to play and listen to good music. When it comes to jazz I really like Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery and Grant Green who's a very melodic kind of player. I also like listening to a singer called Eva Cassidy who sang jazz, blues, R&b, country, pop songs, you name it. She'd sing anything and sound great.

FoD: Thanks for your time, Jack. Any last words?

JDK: Come out to our show at The Duck. It will be a lot of fun.

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