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5 Minutes with... Cheryl Lescom

(Appearing at The Duck Blues Matinee on Saturday,
December 5, 2009)



Friends of the Duck: How have you been keeping Cheryl?

Sheryl Lescom: Very well, thank you. I've been really busy working with four different bands. I sing with two Detroit bands, the Reed Dickinson Program and the Motor City Women. I have my own band based out of London called Cheryl Lescom and the London Explosion, and I do an acoustic act with the Tucson Choir Boys. On top of that I do various guest spots like the one I'm doing at The Duck with the Mighty Duck Blues Band.

FoD: Are the bands you perform with blues bands?

CL: The London Explosion does mostly blues. The others do a variety of stuff from rock to roots.

FoD: Do you consider yourself a blues singer or just a singer, period?

CL: I consider myself a singer, period. But blues is where my feel is and where I started. As far as the rock stuff goes, I can wail it out with the best of them, because I've got a pretty tough voice. I like to mix things up so I'm not doing the same things over and over again.

FoD: Who were your major influences?

CL: Robert Plant was probably my biggest influence when I started out. And there's also Tina Turner, Janis Joplin and Etta James.

FoD: You got your first big break with Ronnie Hawkins and Long John Baldry. Can you tell us a bit about how that came about?

CL: I'd already been in a number of bands singing fulltime for five years, when I received the opportunity to join Ronnie Hawkins as a backup singer. Unfortunately that didn't quite work out, as Ronnie and I didn't see eye-to-eye on some things. I was only with him for a month or so. A few days after we parted company, Long John Baldry was doing a show at The Coronet in Kitchener, my hometown. I was a huge fan of his and went to the gig, where I approached him and asked him if I could sing Black Girl with him. To my pleasant surprise he said 'sure,' so I got up on stage with him, sang the song, and he hired me right there on the spot. That led to doing a national tour with him. I was with him for about a year, when he moved to Vancouver. I only worked with him sporadically after that.

FoD: You've got four CDs to your credit...any word on an upcoming CD from you?

CL: Actually, I just released a new CD called Cheryl Lescom and the Tucson Choir Boys. It's an acoustic album of original songs, which are more roots oriented than bluesy.

FoD: This seems to be a bit of a departure from your previous CDs. How did you feel about doing this material?

CL: I loved it. I loved the process of it and I loved working with the guys. It was a labour of love. The Tucson Choir Boys, who are Ray Walsh on accordion and Dave The Cat on guitar, are fantastic musicians. They have a successful band of their own called Loco Zydeco.

FoD: As a woman, was it hard for you to combine raising a family and a career in music?

CL: I was able to do both quite successfully but it proved to be stressful at times. The only time I ever really needed to put my career on hold was while I was pregnant with my first and second son. I had a couple of miscarriages before that and my doctor said I needed to stay home and relax if I was going to carry full term. I also had to take some time off to recover from cancer. In total I think I missed about two years of performing since I started in 1975.

FoD: What's your best memory?

CL: There's so many but the ones that come to mind are being on stage with Long John. Singing with him was such a thrill. He was a real joy to work with, a real gentleman and a great man. I was honoured in my hometown with the Mel Brown Award at the Kitchener Blues Fest a couple of years ago. My friends and kids were there so it was a special night. It really meant a lot to me and it's a memory I will always cherish.

FoD: Any last words, Cheryl?

CL: Just that I'm looking forward to going back to The Duck. It's a great bar and I had a lot of fun when I did a gig there earlier this year. The band was just awesome and it's always a thrill to work with great musicians I normally don't perform with on a regular basis.



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