

# MR BLACK & BLUES

## PRESS BIO

"This Mr Black & Blues  
sure is an interesting fellow."

- Matt Fredrick, PBS

### From

Melbourne, Victoria and London, England

### Band members

Michael Pollitt... and some heroically  
talented accomplices..



### Sounds like

Eric Bibb getting drunk with Tom Waits and being told to straighten up  
by the ghost of Howlin Wolf in a Clarksdale back alley.

### How did you first get started?

I was a late starter I guess. I started playing guitar when I was 19 and fell  
in love instantly. I always loved rock'n'roll from Elvis through to Jon  
Spencer and when you start following the roots of Rock you're on a  
freight train headed straight for the heart of the blues. I was completely  
self-taught by ear listening to Max Crowdaddy on RRR radio in  
Melbourne on Thursday nights got me deep into the blues masters and I  
was hooked.

I took off to London and played a bunch of sessions and started  
experimenting with my own bands and stayed 10 years.

In 2006 broke I broke my neck in a surfing accident which meant twelve  
months recovery in a full neck brace and the loss of the use of my left

hand for almost a year. My doctors told me the best thing I could do to get the use of my hand back was to play my guitar and they didn't have to ask me twice.

Slowly music gifted me the use of my hand again.

During that process I found the inspiration for the Mr Black & Blues project and began writing the material that would form the debut album, *The Morning Light*. The name Mr Black & Blues was delivered to me during a night in the studio with some friends who worked at the BBC who heard about my accident and said I was not Mr Blues, but Mr Black & Blues.

In early 2007 I set up Breakneck Records and began to organize and promote shows at venues around London. The regular Sunday Breakneck Records sessions at the Old Blue Last became home turf for me as house band and I featured my friends including David Ross Macdonald from the Waifs, and Charlie Winston. I also set up a new "burlesque and blues joint" to be known as the Virginia Creepers Rockin Blues Club and featured the new full band lineup with Lorne Stockman on harmonica, Miles Danso on upright bass, and Zeke Manyika on drums as house band.

By late 2007 the material was really starting to come to life and the house band spots were augmented by regular live shows. I then took the decision to lay the tracks down and approached Liam of Toerag Studio in London. Toerag boasts the original EMI REDD desk from Abbey Road used to record Sergeant Pepper. The White Stripes debut, *Elephant*, which won a Grammy for best production in 2005 recorded at Toerag, was the benchmark and we got cracking over three weekends.

From not knowing if I would be able to play again just 12 months earlier to having a record from Toerag was a dream.

I came home to Australia and set off on an Australian and UK tour in 2010 with brother in-law and John Butler Trio drummer, Jason McGann, and got some support from the Melbourne Blues Society and airplay on PBS and RRR.

I ended up with a residency at the Blues Train down in Queenscliff on the coast of Victoria, Australia. Literally an old working steam train and that gave me the inspiration to want to record my album there as a celebration of that time and because no one had ever done it.. I love that old train and so I invited my hero Chris Wilson, one of Australia's best musicians and harmonica player to join me and the rest is history

#### What made you want to become a musician?

Deep reverential pathological love of music... and discovering I could.

#### What are some of your influences?

I always loved Jon Spencer, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Led Zepplin then Max Crowdaddy introduced me to Chris Wilson, Alvin Youngblood Hart, Chuck Berry, John Lee Hooker, RL Burnside, and my man Howlin Wolf.. more recently its bands like Eileen Jewel, Little Barry, Derek Trucks, Dr Johns new record Locked Down, and Tom Waits "Glitter and Doom" live, and Doyle Bramhall II with that blues infused material that crosses boundaries that is really grabbing me by the ears.

#### Favorite artist and song?

An impossible question... Gaffer together Wail by Jon Spencer and Guru Man Blues by Eric Bibb and we're getting close.

#### Who do you look up to as artists?

Anyone who is true to themselves. Guys like Derek Trucks and Doyle Bramhall II. My local hero's were Geoff Achison and Jeff Lang to begin with and more recently having met Chris Wilson, Jimi Hocking, Sweet Felecia, Andrea Marr, Stringybark McDowell I really respect those guys as real artists and great people. You gotta respect what Jack White and Tom Waits have done in their careers but my all-time hero is Chester Arthur Burnett.. better known as Howlin Wolf ..first man to drive himself out of the delta. Taught himself to read and write at the age of 50. Whatever problem you got, and we all have em, Wolf taught me there is no problem too great and its never too late!

#### Who would be your dream collaboration?

I reached out to Cedric Burnside today and asked him if he wanted to do the next album with me..

### Describe your best gig

Having Chris Wilson sit in on the launch of BLOW THESE TRACKS live on the Mighty Blues Train – he is a mighty man and we damn near tore the carriage apart!

### Describe your worst gig

That time a Bobs Country Bunker when I was booked as Mr Black & Bluegrass.. no seriously playing gigs is pretty much on the same level as breathing for me.. they are the flashes of light between everything else. Even when gear breaks, you gotta learn to handle that onstage with grace and humor. I don't care if its two people or twenty thousand I play every show like its Glastonbury main stage and just tune into myself and have fun. If it feels good on the inside chances are it's pretty good on the outside too.

### Tell us about your latest release

Having returned from London after 10 years abroad and having played together a number of times on the Blues Train with explosive results, I asked Australian Blues music legend **CHRIS WILSON** to make recording history on one of Australia's live music institutions. Not just any train, Queenscliff's own **LEGENDARY BLUES TRAIN** to be exact; home to Australia's finest blues musicians for nearly 20 years.

As anyone who has experienced the electrifying atmosphere of the Blues Train will understand, the endeavor was lofty in its ambition and also fraught with challenges.

It was a difficult project but we're really proud of the results as we hope you dig it too!

"Blow these Tracks", entirely recorded and produced by Michael and his Breakneck Records team, is a follow on from the artists debut EP/DVD, "The Morning Light", and includes songs from this first record as well as yet to be released albums, "Long Road Home", "Live this Moment" and "Velvet Love" which are already completed and slated for release in 2013 and 2014.

For more information visit <http://www.mrblackandblues.com> or <http://www.breakneckrecords.com> and see what happens next.