



**Angela Strehli**

***Ace of Blues***

Album Credits

1. Two Steps From The Blues (D. Malone, J. Brown)
2. Person To Person (E. James, M. Sehorn)
3. Ace Of Spades (D. Malone)
4. I Love The Life I Live (W. Dixon)
5. You Never Can Tell (C. Berry)
6. Gambler's Blues (B.B. King, J. Pate)
7. Howlin' For My Darling (C. Burnett, W. Dixon)
8. Trying To Live My Life Without You (E. Williams)
9. Take Out Some Insurance (J. Stone)
10. More And More (D. Juan, P. Smith)
11. I Wouldn't Mind Dying (D. Coates)
12. SRV (A. Strehli)

Musicians

Mike Schermer - guitar

Steve Ehrmann - bass

Kevin Hayes - drums

Mike Emerson - keyboards

Johnny Allair - keyboards

Jim Pugh - B3 organ

Walter "Gomez" Morgan, Jr. - guitar

DaQuantae Johnson - bass

Paul Revelli - drums

Bill Gibson - drums

\*Mark Kazanoff - harmonica

HORNS

Rob Sudduth - tenor saxophone (and charts)

Johnnie Beaumont - baritone saxophone

Marvin McFadden - trumpet

Arrangements adapted by Rob Sudduth

\*\*Christoffer "Kid" Andersen - additional guitar

\*\*\*Sons of the Soul Revivers - Backing Vocals at Greaseland

Lisa Leuschner - additional backing vocals on *You Never Can Tell* and *Trying To Live My Life Without You*

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Recorded at Laughing Tiger Studios (San Rafael, CA)  
Engineered by Ari Rios, assisted by Erin Tadena  
Mixed at Greaseland Studios (San Jose, CA) by Christoffer “Kid” Andersen  
Mastered at Fivepoints Mastering by Kenneth Love  
Produced by Bob & Angela  
Executive Producer - Bob Brown

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*SRV*

Recorded at Laughing Tiger Studios (San Rafael, CA) 2005  
Mike Schermer - lead guitar  
Gary Vogensen - rhythm guitar  
Steve Ehrmann - bass  
Paul Revelli - drums  
John Lee Sanders - B3 organ  
Engineered and mixed by Ari Rios

Album Design & Photography - Paul Moore  
Booking - Michael Morris, Mint Talent Group, [michael@minttalentgroup.com](mailto:michael@minttalentgroup.com)  
Management – Bob Brown Management, [bob@ranchonicasio.com](mailto:bob@ranchonicasio.com)  
Project Management - Matt Etgen

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SPECIAL THANKS

My deepest thanks are to Bob Brown. He suggested it was time to record a collection of songs by the artists who had most inspired me to be a singer. It was my great fortune to personally know nine of these legendary artists. Bob helped me choose the material and assembled the right combination of players. The sessions were organized so well, we completed this record in less than two weeks’ time.

I want to thank all the wonderful players for giving me a comfort level that allowed us to use many of my “first takes.” This genre of music deserves that spontaneity and energy.

I want to especially thank Mike Schermer. For me to really sing the blues, I absolutely depend on the inspiration of a great guitarist. I’ve sung with some of the greatest ever. “Mighty” Mike is one of them.

My sincere thanks as well to ....

Christoffer “Kid” Andersen for all his amazing audio/visual skills.

Matt Etgen, Caroline Barfield, and the whole New West team for all their help and enthusiastic support. It means a lot.

Paul Moore and his assistant Stephanie Lavoie for making the photo shoot an enjoyable experience.

Chrysti Marie for hair and make-up and good company at that same shoot.

Bill Bentley for his long time support.

Ari Rios for his musical ideas and helping our sessions run smoothly.

Annie Sampson, Dorothy Morrison, and Tracy Nelson, my comrades in The Blues Broads.

James Cacciatore and Jocelyn Knight for their photography and videography expertise and friendship.

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Angela's liners

“TWO STEPS FROM THE BLUES”

BOBBY BLAND

This project started with the idea of finding songs by the blues masters who inspired me to become a singer. Bob and I had a large vinyl collection to pour through, and Bobby's album with this tune was an instant contender. It's a special song that he did beautifully. In paying tribute to these important artists, I wanted to stay as true to their original recorded arrangements as possible. This one may have been the most difficult, but I think we got it. My band Southern Feeling opened for Bobby Bland at the Austin Coliseum in 1976.

“PERSON TO PERSON”

ELMORE JAMES

Elmore's music was a life-changer for me. The rawness of his vocals and his unique slide guitar technique made me a fan for life. I recorded his version of “It Hurts Me Too” on my first LP, *Soul Shake*. I had several of his songs in my show for years. This is an infectious shuffle that somehow never made the set list.

“ACE OF SPADES”

O.V. WRIGHT

He came from the gospel tradition but landed squarely in the Rhythm and Blues world. I loved the minor keys he chose and the toughness of his style. This song has got it all. I had fun personalizing the vamp ending. The band and horn section nailed this!

“I LOVE THE LIFE I LIVE”

MUDDY WATERS

This Willie Dixon tune represents Muddy's attitude as I remember him.

I had an excuse to spend a few days in Chicago in 1965. I got to see his “super group” featuring Otis Spann on piano. I was able to meet him and explain why a girl from Texas would be such a fan. (He was better known in Europe than in America.) Muddy was a master of phrasing, and he ran a tight ship on stage. Years later when I was at Antone's, he played for 3 nights, joined by Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, to celebrate his 60th birthday. I got to open the

show and then he invited me to join him during his set. Afterwards, he generously offered me some thoughtful suggestions. Instead of doubting our intentions or abilities as some blues “purists” were doing, he realized our serious dedication to perform the original styles with authentic feeling. The important thing was for the music to be preserved and presented with respect.

“YOU NEVER CAN TELL”

CHUCK BERRY

Besides his iconic guitar style, for me, he was “the poet of rock and roll.” An example is the alliteration in the first line of this song. “It was a teenage wedding and the old folks wished them well.” Not to mention the French! That’s John Allair, a longtime friend, who at 82 years old still tours with Van Morrison, killing it on an old upright piano. Bill Gibson, of Huey Lewis and the News, brought a stripped down drum kit, just a snare and kick, to duplicate the early rock & roll sound of the 1950s. Another fun track.

“GAMBLER’S BLUES”

OTIS RUSH

His voice and guitar were intense and haunting. I loved his tough approach to both. I got to know him because of his performances at Antone’s over the years. He was generally a wary sort of person, but our gang at the club put him at ease, especially the house band who definitely had done their homework. That was a good thing since he often did NONE of the material they had practiced with him at sound check! This hard hitting blues is the kind I prefer to sing.

“HOWLIN’ FOR MY DARLING”

HOWLIN’ WOLF

This is the only song on this collection that I have performed live many times over the years. It’s always fun to do. Wolf may have captured my attention more than anyone else while listening to the radio as a teenager in Lubbock. There was really nobody quite like him. Having seen some vintage footage of him, I expected Wolf to perform sitting in a chair. Well, he was stalking around the stage, and at one point started crawling up the curtain! I was speechless and thrilled.

“TRYING TO LIVE MY LIFE WITHOUT YOU”

OTIS CLAY

Bob and I got to know Otis after a gig of his in Chicago. Sometime later, he asked me to sing with him on a tune he was recording at his home studio which had the original recording equipment of Brunswick Records circa 1950. One day he invited us for lunch to a place called Edna’s in his neighborhood on the rugged West Side. When we finally got a cab driver willing to take us there, we took a seat in a booth. Folks that were seated at the counter and in the booths all around us seemed surprised to see us. In fact the guy sitting behind us put us at ease by asking, “You ever been here before? You’re going to love the food. Edna guarantees her food!” After a few long minutes, Otis showed up, obviously the local hero. Edna immediately came to our table to welcome us.

This was a signature tune for Otis and really captured the spirit of our friend. A wonderful man.

“TAKE OUT SOME INSURANCE”

## JIMMY REED

He was the first commercially successful blues artist that I was aware of. Kids older than I would dance “The Push” to his music. Jimmy had many hits all with a unique groove. It was Eddie Taylor who played the backbeat rhythm that made these records perfect for dancing. After Jimmy died, Eddie ended up being a frequent visitor who was dearly loved by all at Antone’s for his sweet, unassuming personality, and his tasteful playing. Several of Jimmy’s tunes were humorous. This is one of my favorites.

## “MORE AND MORE”

### LITTLE MILTON

One of the highest compliments of my career was when Milton asked if I was interested in touring with him. I had obligations I couldn’t change, but it was one of the proudest moments I’ve ever had. Besides being a premier singer, writer, and guitarist, I admired the fact that he never stopped performing on the “chitlin’ circuit” for his fans. Just a classy guy all the way around.

## “I WOULDN’T MIND DYING”

### DOROTHY LOVE COATES

I’ve been a gospel fan for as many years as I’ve been a blues fan. I love the “golden era of gospel” of the ‘50s—the quartets and small ensembles are my favorites. Dorothy Love Coates was probably the preeminent artist of that time. The great background vocals by our friends, The Sons of the Soul Revivers, make this version an authentic tribute to Ms. Coates.

## “SRV”

### ANGELA STREHLI

It took me about two years to compose this tribute to Stevie. I originally recorded it on Blue Highway, my last studio record, 17 years ago. This project is a tribute to the blues masters, many of which I was fortunate to know. Stevie, although of a different generation, was definitely one of them. I knew him as a teenager who moved down to Austin following his big brother Jimmie (of The Fabulous Thunderbirds). He became part of our scene at Antone’s. When he started his first band, he asked my advice about how to sing. He needed no help playing guitar. I told him to find a song he liked and sing it over and over until he was happy with it. He chose a song I had been doing for years called “Texas Flood.” It did very well for him ... and I had to stop using it! Stevie was a true friend and a fan of mine. When his career took off, he made sure I was featured on some very special occasions. In 1987 I was his guest at the CBS Records’ international convention in Hawaii where he and Jeff Beck backed me up. I was also part of two great Austin City Limits shows and most notably, a Carnegie Hall concert that was released as a live record. Stevie’s absolute mentor was Albert King, who he met and became friends with at Antone’s. So, I sang one of Albert’s tunes that night called “C.O.D.” I will always miss Stevie and his passion for music.

## SOME HISTORY

My wife, Angela Strehli, was born on November 22, 1945 in Lubbock, Texas. She grew up in an academic environment. Her father, Alfred, was a Spanish professor at Texas Tech for over 40 years. Her mother Bea, ran a pre-school in their home in the 1950’s before there were

kindergartens. Angela's first musical experience was playing cello in her junior high school orchestra along with a neighbor, Joe Ely, on violin. Jimmy Dale Gilmore and Butch Hancock were also in that neighborhood and along with Joe became The Flatlanders, all longtime friends. Buddy Holly grew up there as well, a few years earlier.

She went to Carleton, a small liberal arts college in Minnesota. After two years she returned to Texas and graduated from the University of Texas in Austin which became her home for the next 25 years. In 1989, Angela moved to Northern California where we share our life. In 1998 we bought and revived an old roadhouse/restaurant called Rancho Nicasio. Angela has done much of her singing there since then, sitting in with dozens of bands that come to play. She made a Live at Rancho Nicasio record with her own band there and also started a vintage "supergroup" called The Blues Broads about 15 years ago that also had a "live" album and still do a few dates a year. My conversation with her will tell the rest of her story.

**Bob: Let's start with your interest in the blues.**

**Angela:** I had a Zenith shortwave radio and late at night it could reach Shreveport, LA, Dallas and Del Rio TX. They all had blues programs. It was music unlike anything I had ever heard. Artists like Howlin' Wolf and Jimmy Reed captured my imagination. I wanted to find out what it was all about. I wrote a song about growing up with this music called "Two Bit Texas Town." It's on a record made in the early '90s called *Blonde and Blue*.

**You've told me about your first live blues music experience in Chicago.**

Yes. While I was still in college I had an excuse to travel to Chicago for a project, but my main mission was to see my blues heroes perform. Chicago was then the hotbed of the blues. I got to see Muddy Waters and somehow had the courage to introduce myself after his show. I told him that I had come all the way from Texas to hear the real blues. He was very gracious and amazingly 10 years later we became friends. I also saw Howlin' Wolf at his club, Silvio's. It was New Year's Eve, 1966. I wasn't expecting to actually meet him, but there he was at the door letting people in, an intimidating character, and I was dreadfully under dressed. Like in a film I had seen of him, I expected Wolf to perform sitting in a chair. Well, he was stalking the stage and at one point started crawling up the curtain! I was speechless and thrilled.

**So how did you wind up being a singer?**

I didn't make the high school choir so I really wasn't thinking about being a singer. I did play some bass and harmonica and wanted to be a musician. The first band I was in had a bass player but needed a singer. That's how it started. I then formed The Fabulous Rockets. This was in the early '70s. After a couple of years I was invited to join a soul/rhythm & blues group called James Polk & The Brothers. James was a great band leader and I learned a lot from him. Two years later I started the group Southern Feeling with W.C. Clark. Denny Freeman was our lead guitarist and we became a prominent band in the Austin area. Denny's playing inspired me to start The Angela Strehli Band. It was then I began to write my own material and became a confident lead singer and bandleader.

**Antone's became a big part of your life. How did that all start?**

Clifford Antone had recently moved to Austin from Port Arthur. He was a big fan of the blues and became a fan of mine. After seeing many shows in some pretty funky bars, he asked me to help him open a new blues club, Antone's, that became a world famous venue which still exists today. This was in 1975 and was downtown on 6th Street. The blues was not at all popular at the time so it was an iffy endeavor. We were hoping to give long neglected blues masters a home in Texas. Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, Albert King, Little Milton, Albert Collins, and Otis Rush were among the greats that performed there and became true friends. But first, we needed a house band to back them up as we were flying them in, mostly from Chicago. The newly formed Fabulous Thunderbirds with Jimmie Vaughan and Kim Wilson fit the bill perfectly. The next few years I was part of this whole exciting scene. I learned my craft by both watching and performing with these great men. How lucky!

**What other shows were special for you over the years?**

My band had a great time playing the main stage at The New Orleans Jazz Festival in 1992. It was inspiring to perform for thousands of true music fans at this historic event. We got to stay on the stage wings to watch Al Green who followed us. Good times. There was a tribute to John Lee Hooker at Madison Square Garden. I was on the bill and got to sing to a sold out house with Gregg Allman and Johnny Winter backing me up! I got to know Gregg pretty well when he lived in Northern California. I sat in with his band a few times. Sweet guy. My European tours were also important to me. I developed a loyal fan base in Scandinavia. Norway in particular had rabid blues fans ... always a good adventure.

Of course all the shows I got to do with Stevie were special. I witnessed him taking the blues to a whole new generation of fans and expanding its popularity worldwide. It was incredible to be part of that.

**You have been performing live now for 55 years. When did you start making records?**

By 1986 Antone's was very successful. While Clifford was "on vacation" for a couple of years I decided to start a label. I called it Antone's Records. Since I was the president I decided that the first release would be The Angela Strehli Band! It was called *Soul Shake* and it sold enough that other artists wanted to sign on. I made four more solo records since then. The last, *Blue Highway*, was 17 years ago! The amazing thing is that this new album is on New West / Antone's Records. Bob found out that New West had acquired the Antone's catalog and sent this project to their president, John Allen. I feel fortunate that John not only took the time to listen but genuinely enjoyed what we did. To have a new record released on a great label at 76 years old is something I could never have imagined.

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This record was a joy to make. I very much wanted Ace to give the studio one more shot, while I thought she still "had it." She sang her heart out and in only 12 days we were done. My wife is as genuine and soulful a woman you will meet. Her voice tells it all.