

Blues Child with "old soul"

Half of *Puppet Show* was cut in one take, with no overdubs to preserve the feel and energy of a live Ally Venable performance.

By Jackie Don Loe

IT WAS FLOODING DOWN IN TEXAS THE day I spoke with Ally Venable from her home in Kilgore. The rains were not letting up but that did not dampen her spirit or excitement of how she feels about the upcoming release of her sophomore effort, *Puppet Show*.

Hailed as a powerhouse blues rock guitarist and singer from the Lone Star State, she has been performing and touring in support of her first record *No Glass Shoes* 2016. The ETX Music Awards recognized Ally Venable as the winner of the Best Female Guitarist in 2014 and 2015 as well as Blues Band of The Year in 2015, 2016 and 2017. She also earned Album of The Year for *No Glass Shoes* in 2017.

She has been paying her dues and is dedicated to making her scene happen. "It is really cool to see a community that appreciates what I do and supports my musical endeavors," says Ally. She is very grateful for the awards but it makes her want to work harder to achieve her goals. Making a name for herself as a hot shot guitarist can also lead to landing endorsements from Fishman Pickups, Ernie Ball Strings, Category 5 Amps, Galaxy Audio and Jetslide.

No stranger to the local scene, I remember hearing her last year at the Dallas Guitar Show and thinking—wow—that girl sure can play! Then a few months later I heard her tearing it up at the Bedford Blues Festival. Ally admits that it is rare that a teenage female gravitates toward playing the guitar in a blues rock band, but if you play it with all your heart and soul, the people will listen and feel your passion. The power of music to heal, Ally knows this sacred secret and she knows how to turn it on.

Blues child

AT ONLY NINETEEN-YEARS-OLD, Ally is an "old soul" that connected with the blues by the age of twelve when she received her first guitar and first heard

Stevie Ray Vaughan. Born nine years after Stevie passed, she followed SRV's blues path and also discovered the styles of Freddie King, Buddy Guy, Albert Collins, and Albert King.

"Wow, I want to learn how to do that!" said Ally. It was a connection that resonated deep within her heart and would propel her to want to get on stage and share her love of the blues.

"I want to connect with people and let them know it's ok to feel a certain way." Growing up in East Texas provided her the opportunity to become a protegee of such pro players as Lance Lopez and Wes Jeans. Learning songs and playing shows with these guys quickly increased Ally's technique and prowess on the guitar.

"I love jamming and learning from other musicians." In just a short time her career has really blossomed and she has been developing her own sound, writing songs, always leaving room for growth and new ideas. We all go through the same struggles and as an entertainer you become sort of a "Blues Doctor" at times and you give your audience the medicine they need to cure their ills. Ally exclaims, "Hopefully my music can give them an outlet."

Her talent is beyond her years and her appeal is pleasant, she is a very nice young lady with a lot of class. But she can also take command of the stage like a "rock star," sing her heart out and smoke the guitar with vintage tones and skillful licks. Lookout, Ally is not just another strummer, she knows how to rock and has become a real crowd pleaser.

Puppet Show

THE NEW RECORD PUPPET



She is scheduled to perform at Poor David's Pub March 9, Texas Musicians Museum March 17, Ally Venable

Show was mixed and mastered by Rock Romano at Red Shack Studio in Houston. The sound is amazing and is really warm and vibrant. The ten songs featured are full of energy and sound fantastic. It is a great representation of Ally's live show. About half of the record was cut in one take, with no overdubs to preserve the live feel. The rhythm section is comprised of Bobby Wallace on the bass and Elijah Owings on the drums; both are incredible players and multi-instrumentalists with a sense of song structure and not just jamming over the changes. Ally expressed the love for her band mates. "We are together all the time. I'm very grateful to have them, we are like family; they are like my brothers."

There are special guest appearances with Gary Hoey on the first cut "Devil's Son" in which Gary plays a haunting slide lick that sounds like a fire alarm from Hades. Gary declares, "Had a blast guesting on 'Devil's Son' Ally Venable has a maturity as a song writer beyond her years and her guitar playing and singing are the real deal."

Lance Lopez is quoted, "Ally Venable has been working very hard to become the young guitar slingin' senorita she is...it's been such a pleasure to share my knowledge with her and watch her grow!" He trades licks with her on "Bridges To Burn" and it's

hard to tell who is who. Ally holds her own with Lopez and impresses with some hot guitar licks. Eric Steckel is also a guest and adds his keyboard talent on several songs such as "Survive" and the cover of "He Caught The Katy" which also features Steve Kruse on superb harmonica.

The spectrum of the blues is shining all over this record; Ally knows her way around the fretboard and is no one-trick pony. Funky riffs, open slide tunings, Delta style and Texas boogies, Blues Rock anthems and an epic slow blues are represented in full effect. "Comfort In My Sorrows" is the perfect song to listen to on a rainy afternoon, even if it rains every day. The tempo and feel reminds me of "Ball And Chain" by Janis Joplin. The song "Waste It On You" has a Bonnie Raitt style yet Ally makes it her own. She recorded with her main axe, a Fender American Deluxe with special Fishman Pickups allowing her a 20db boost. She also used a Telecaster and a '90s Gibson Les Paul, all going through her Category 5 Custom Andrew amplifier.

Songwriting

ALLY WROTE ALL THE SONGS on *Puppet Show* except the one cover song and says, "Sometimes I hear the whole song but it usually starts with a guitar riff and I then build on that." Her lyrics give clues to moving on from the

past in "Bridges To Burn" Ally sings, "Well, I got some bridges to burn, Yes I'm going to make it hurt, Yes I'm going to make them pay, For all the pain that they gave."

In "Cast Their Stones" with the cool Leslie speaker effect on the guitar she sings, "All the things of the past, It ain't going to last, Let them cast their stones, Because it won't be long, Til' I give it to them all."

She takes control on the title track and asserts, "I ain't your puppet, And this ain't your show." Ally recalls the expression that explains her method and says, "It usually goes from my head to my heart to my hands." The process of writing songs is magical, "You're making something out of nothing, it's like brain candy, you have this instrument made of wood with strings on it and you plug it in." Whatever is going on in Venable's life or the way she feels is the subject matter of her songs, to tell a story yet connect with the audience on a universal level. "I've worked really hard on this album for everyone, I hope they love it as much as I enjoyed creating it for them."

On the road

THE ALLY VENABLE BAND will be going on the road this spring and summer and have shows lined up in Texas, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Arizona

and Colorado. Her live shows are explosive and she has attained many fans. Ally loves performing live but is also savvy with social media. "I do like the fact that there is a live option on Facebook."

She loves interacting with the crowd, even if you can't make the show you can see it on social media and feel special. With over twelve thousand followers, anything she posts will be noticed in a big way. It is this extra attention that keeps her noted as an exceptional player on the Modern Blues scene. A fan favorite, "I love talking to people and getting their feedback." Ally also realizes her role to the younger generation; "I hope I'm a good role model to young girls to get them into the Blues, even if they don't play guitar."

I feel that Ally Venable is poised to become a household name when talking about Texas guitar players. She has many years left to perfect her art and create her songs. It is the young torchbearers of the Blues that will keep the world a better place; Ally is well on her way to spread the gospel of Texas Music.

For all events visit allyvenableband.com. The Ally Venable Band will be at Poor David's Pub March 9, Texas Musicians Museum March 17, The Keys Lounge in Fort Worth April 20, and Six Springs Tavern April 21

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