

## TIM WILLIAMS

*“Conversation halts, glasses still, and all eyes turn on Tim Williams as the room becomes a train stop on a tour of half-forgotten memories in the collective consciousness.”*

Program notes, 2005 Calgary Folk Music Festival

Born in Southern California in the late 1940s, Tim Williams was both a published poet and an emerging coffee house phenomenon by his late teens in the mid-1960s. His first LP recording, *Blues Full Circle* (produced by Arhoolie Records legend Chris Strachwitz, cover photo by Jim Marshall, liner notes by Pete Welding, and boasting appearances by L.A. blues veterans Pee Wee Crayton and George “Harmonica” Smith) came out when he was just 20 years old. Although most often known within the context of the blues, Williams grew up hearing (and able to play) everything from the Bob Wills and Sons of the Pioneers music his parents preferred, to the Mexican and Hawaiian music which were part of the musical melting pot of the Los Angeles area.

Quickly mastering acoustic and electric guitar, banjo, and mandolin, Tim was also introduced at a young age to the rudiments of Hawaiian steel guitar by his grandfather. Over a short period of time he became extremely fluent in the Delta bottleneck and Bluegrass Dobro techniques as well. When he moved to Vancouver in 1970, weary of America’s wars and assassinations, he immediately found work as a studio musician playing on gospel, folk and country recordings, plus commercial jingles selling everything from weed killer to Toyotas. In addition, he taught guitar and continued to tour as a headliner in smaller venues and an opening act in the larger ones. His live shows moved away from the “blues-only” approach he had been taking to include more traditional country and western swing music, and his growing body of original songs.

The 1974 single “Careful Mountain Pony” was a surprise hit with country radio, but when two follow-ups received critical praise and no sales (and the label went under) Tim left music for a year to work as a horse wrangler in the British Columbia interior. For the next several years he would vacillate between music and ranch work, releasing two LPs of bluesy country-folk (1977’s *Writin’ This Song* “...Williams is one of the best songwriters anywhere.” Canadian Composer magazine; and 1982’s *It’s Enough To Be Remembered*, which was heavily praised by other writers like Tom Russell and resulted in Mel Tillis beginning to publish his tunes in Nashville). Valdy covered “My Heart Can’t Take Another Rodeo from the latter disc on his own “*Notes From Places*” LP. A co-write with Laurie Thain, “Tryin’ To Rope The Wind” was a runner-up in the Billboard World Song Round-Up. And was covered by Cindy Church on her *Just A Little Rain* cd.

Following his first appearance at the Edmonton Folk Festival in 1988, Tim returned to performing and writing full time. In addition to his solo work he co-founded the popular acoustic blues trio Triple Threat, and co-produced their JUNO-nominated cd *The Terra Firma Boogie*. From that disc, zydeco star CJ Chenier covered Tim’s song “Au Contraire, Mon Frere,” as did Toronto’s Krockodiles. Steve Pineo covered “In Rehearsal For The Blues” on his second cd. Leaving Triple Threat in 1994 with his solo release

*Riverboat Rendezvous* (“...Tim Williams has the taste, panache and style to pull it off.” Living Blues magazine) Tim released several more cds and has continued to tour Canada and much of the rest of the world, spreading his blend of blues, roots and original music with three tours of the United Kingdom, two of Australia, appearances in Cuba and Morocco, as well as producing numerous cds for other artists (another JUNO nomination for Ray Bonneville’s *Rough Luck* cd) and working in theatre as a composer and musical director (five Betty Mitchell Awards for Outstanding Musical Direction and Outstanding Composition).

Tracks from several of the above, out-of-print cds are available on the brand-new first volume of a planned two-disc anthology, *Passed Through Here : Selected Recordings* (“...some of the finest music ever to hit a cd player.” Ffwd magazine) distributed by Festival Distribution [www.festival.bc.ca](http://www.festival.bc.ca). Also available from them is *Tim Williams & The Electro-Fires Live At Kaos*, which documents Tim’s long-time electric unit of Ron Casat, keyboards and vocals, Suitcase James, bass, Kevin Belzner, drums, and Mike Clark, tenor sax (“...one of the finest Canadian blues ensembles of the last three decades” The Edmonton Journal). There will be a new studio disc out in the next six months as well as several interesting side projects: recordings with both Guy Davis and Eric Bibb, and participation in a two-cd Hank Williams set. Fruteland Jackson will record Tim’s “The Fool You Always Knew” early in 2006, as well.

Tim has taught at the Hornby Island Blues Camp/Festival, the Bulkley Valley Music Camp, and in clinics for music stores and societies across Canada. His techniques are demonstrated on *Blues, Rasg and Slide Guitar* from [www.learnrootsmusic.com](http://www.learnrootsmusic.com). He has appeared at (this is a very selective list):

The Kerrville Folk Festival (Texas)  
The Montreal Jazz Festival  
The Winnipeg Folk Music Festival  
The Australian Blues Music Festival  
The Festival of the Plucked String (Rabat, Morocco)  
The Edmonton Folk Music Festival  
The Vancouver Island Music Festival  
The Calgary Folk Music Festival  
Long Day’s Night Festival (Swift Current, Saskatchewan)  
Northwest Folklife Festival (Seattle)  
Mid-Winter Blues Festival (Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)  
Festival du Jour du Black et Blues (Montreal)  
Alberta Scene Festival (Ottawa)

And has appeared in concert halls, clubs and workshops with (again, very selective):

B.B. King  
Lightnin’ Hopkins  
Mose Allison  
The Holmes Brothers

Odetta  
Paul Geremia  
Rory Block  
Alvin Youngblood Hart  
Robert “Junior” Lockwood  
Honeyboy Edwards  
Earl Scruggs  
Larry Coryell  
Lenny Breau  
Bonnie Raitt  
Dr. John  
Roy Rogers  
Mary Flower

Much more than a blues musician, Tim has played with Moroccan Gnawa master Magid Bekas, Malian Griot Boubacar Traore, Classical Indian mandola artist Snehashish Mozumder, English guitar hero Sir Martin Carthy, and multi-instrument wizard David Lindley.

As well, Tim is a member of the Highwater Jug Band (along with John Rutherford and Dan Tapanila of “No Guff”, award-winning songwriter Mark Sadlier-Brown, and long-time bassist Suitcase James), performing obscure and classic hokum and ragtime tunes plus originals, played on a variety of vintage and homemade instruments.

Imagine, if you can, a front porch where Robert Johnson, Hank Williams, Hula Hattie, Flaco Jimenez and Bob Marley meet often and discover just how much they have in common. Tim’s music would fit right in.

***[www.go.to/twilliamsblues.com](http://www.go.to/twilliamsblues.com)***