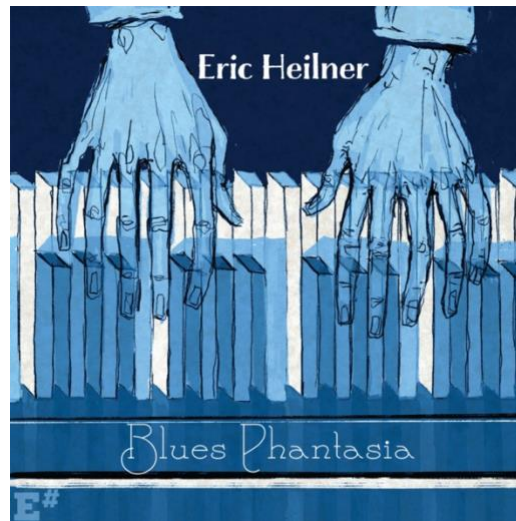


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Eric Heilner Releases Blues Phantasia



“Eric is a musical chameleon, able to take his classical musical background and infuse his music with a wonderful kaleidoscope of fascinating tints and shades, moods and melodies, his fingers running up and down the keyboard with rollicking enthusiasm.”

[Blue Notes and Conversations](#)

Montclair, NJ May 17, 2024

Multifaceted musician/composer **Eric Heilner** presents a new album of blues & boogie-woogie piano music. While Heilner is primarily a composer of contemporary classical music, **Blues Phantasia** highlights Heilner’s unique interpretations of the boogie woogie piano tradition with four original tunes along with two tracks that honor Heilner’s deep affection for the blues.

Blues Phantasia is available on all standard streaming platforms including [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), [YouTube](#) and is available for download on [Bandcamp](#).

www.ericheilner.com

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Eric Heilner – Composer / Bluesman

Award winning composer Eric Heilner grew up in a household imbued with classical music, but a teenage encounter with the boogie-woogie music of Meade Lux Lewis and others led to a lifelong affection for blues and boogie-woogie piano.

In the 1970s, Heilner toured the East Coast with a variety of bands, played in an opening act for the then rising Bruce Springsteen, wrote songs, and recorded on an album produced by Jack Douglas (John Lennon, Aerosmith, Cheap Trick, Patti Smith, etc). However, after turning 30, he retired from the music business, put his electric piano in the attic, and became a “respectable” member of society.

In the early 2000s, with the encouragement of his wife and family, Heilner came out of musical retirement and started playing rock and roll. However he was also drawn back to his classical roots. Musical themes – entire pieces – would play through his mind as he walked down the street. Finally, Heilner gave into the urge and started studying composition at the Juilliard Evening School. Within a few years, Heilner was composing fully developed pieces for chamber ensembles and orchestras. His pieces have been performed at various venues in New York City, Moscow, Los Angeles, Milan, Vienna, and Lviv, Ukraine.

In October 2020 ,he reconnected with producer Jack Douglas and released his first album – *Modern Sounds in Classical Music*. The album features Heilner’s chamber music for strings, woodwinds, and pianos. The album has received excellent reviews and some airplay on college radio stations.

In May 2024 Heilner released his second album, titled *Blues Phantasia* - which features his unique interpretations of the blues and boogie-woogie piano legacy. Both albums are available for streaming on most digital platforms including [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), [YouTube](#), etc, etc, or you can purchase a digital download on [Bandcamp](#). You can also listen to some of his more recent compositions [here](#).

Heilner has had significant successes in the international competition arena. His composition *Excursion for Piano Trio #4* recently won first place in the prestigious [Vienna Classical Music Academy Competition](#). Other compositions have also garnered [3rd place](#) and [honorable mentions](#).

While Heilner continues to devote most of his time composing, he can still be found playing rock & roll keyboards in his favorite haunts in the wilds of New Jersey. He recently represented the North Jersey Blues Society in the [International Blues Challenge](#) in Memphis, Tennessee.

Photo: Bill Solomon

About the Music (some personal reflections)

Honky Tonk Train Blues

It was the late summer of 1965 and I was about to enter my senior year of high school. Earlier that summer I had taken a course in computer programming at Stevens Institute of Technology (sponsored by the National Science Foundation) – setting the course for my later career as a computer programmer and branding me for life as a computer nerd. However, on this particular day I found myself at home alone and, having nothing better to do, I started rummaging in my father's record collection - my dad had very eclectic tastes in music ranging from Bach to folk music.

My eye was caught by an album "*Boogie Woogie, Jump and Kansas City*" distributed by the Library of Congress. I put it on the turntable and this strange haunting music came on. It sounded sort of like rock & roll, but my teenage mind detected something deeper (earthier?) happening. There was Tampa red and Speckled Red and some guy was singing about a Monday gal and a Tuesday gal, etc – my naïve 16 year old mind couldn't quite wrap my head around this - "How does this guy do it?"

And then a piano instrumental started – *Honky Tonk Train Blues* - recorded by Meade "Lux" Lewis in 1927 – and I fell into a trance. Each time the music finished the 12 bar cycle and started the next verse, it felt like Lewis was talking directly to me – "*Hey Eric, you think that was cool, now check out what I'm gonna do next*". I listened to it over and over, and then sat down at the piano and worked out the basics of what Lewis was playing. Late in the afternoon my father got home from his job at the public library in Passaic, NJ – and was startled to see/hear his gawky, nerdy, pimply-faced teenage son playing the piano and somehow channeling a long dead black blues player.

I am now much more acquainted with all the blues & boogie greats, but Honky Tonk Train Blues is still my "heart beat". While I pride myself on having my own style of playing and avoid doing note for note copies of the originals, this is the one exception – The album finishes with a fairly accurate replica of the original 1927 Meade "Lux" Lewis version.

Chains

Chains is a pop tune written by Carole King & Gerry Goffin; it was a hit single for an all girl group The Cookies in 1962 and was covered by the Beatles on their first album (George sang lead!). Now fast forward. In the late 1970s I played with a central NJ based band Heavy Trucking. Heavy Trucking was very popular in the area and even opened up for the soon to be world famous Bruce Springsteen (this was after his first album). Heavy Trucking did a blues/rock version *Chains* which I really enjoyed. playing. That arrangement has stuck with me through the years.

Blues Phantasia, Hills & Valleys, In A Mist, and RumBoogie

The original tunes are the musical core of the album. I could give detailed descriptions of the origins and creation of these original tunes but I'll let them speak for themselves.