

SUGAR BROWN - IT'S A BLUES WORLD

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TRACK LIST

1. Hummingbird (2:40)
2. Love Me Twice (5:42)
3. Lousy Dimes (3:33)
4. Sure as the Stars (3:14)
5. It's a Blues World (5:25)
6. Hard to Love (4:10)
7. Out of the Frying Pan (3:07)
8. What I Know (4:33)
9. Tide Blues (3:41)
10. Those Things You Said (3:21)
11. Looking for Two o'clock (2:42)
12. Dew on the Grass (3:03)
13. Brothers (2:27)

All songs are written, composed/arranged, and produced by Sugar Brown

It's a blues world, and Sugar Brown is living in it and "calling all blues" with real grace and style. The Toronto-based vocalist, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist has found his full creative voice on *It's A Blues World (Calling All Blues!)*, his third album, to be released in March 2018.

Following on from his 2014 debut *Sugar Brown's Sad Day* and 2015's acclaimed *Poor Lazarus*, the new record mines the various strata of the blues genre, digging deep and unearthing dazzling new gems. Brown possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of the form, but his songs are passionate, singular, and soulful, constantly resisting generic, mainstream formulations.

He explains his free-wheeling and idiosyncratic style this way: "Each song here is a blues world. They go from country to urban, from the '30s to '70s, but they are little worlds within the blues. *It's A Blues World* was recorded at Toronto studio Marquee Sound, with engineer Braden Sauder. Situated in an old movie theatre, the studio focuses on analog recording, Sugar Brown's preferred form. "We recorded on two tracks, to quarter inch tape," he explains. "I brought in one piece of recording gear, a 1936 Collins mike pre-amp, and plugged in my vocal microphone through that."

"By using the technologies of older recording, I want to give the listener a different sonic listening experience than what we've come to blindly accept in digital recording. That is part of the experience of a Sugar Brown album."

It's A Blues World has a rich, warm and intimate sound that is the perfect setting for Brown's original compositions. The mastering work of Grammy-winner Peter J. Moore (Cowboy Junkies, Bob Dylan's *Basement Tapes*) is the icing on the cake of the recording. Joining Brown in the studio were such elite players as Michelle Josef (drums), Russ Boswell (bass), Nichol Robertson (guitar), Julian Fauth (piano), and Julia Narveson (horns and fiddle).

One special guest was US guitar ace Rockin' Johnny Burgin, a close comrade of Sugar Brown on the Chicago scene in the '90s. "Johnny was largely responsible for getting me to play blues guitar," Brown

recalls. "Having Johnny on the new record helped make my connection to the West Side of Chicago blues explicit. As a seasoned recording artist, he was also very helpful in the studio in keeping the process going."

Recognition of Sugar Brown as a fresh, authentic and original voice in North American blues came in 2013 with his victory in the prestigious Toronto Blues Society Talent Search. In early 2017, he reached the finals of The International Blues Challenge in Memphis, while his performances at such major Canadian music festivals as the Montreal International Jazz Festival, Mariposa Folk Festival, Salmon Arm Roots and Blues Festival, Edmonton Blues Festival, and Kitchener Blues Festival have been enthusiastically received.

His life story is certainly not an orthodox one for a blues artist. Sugar Brown was born Ken Kawashima, to a Japanese father and Korean mother who both immigrated to the United States in the mid-1960s. He was raised in Bowling Green, Ohio, then moved to Chicago to pursue his studies.

He soon immersed himself in that city's rich blues culture and heritage, and his enduring passion for the form was born. Chicago is where Brown cut his teeth as a blues musician, working extensively with such local heroes as Taildragger (the man who gave Kawashima his nickname), as well as with Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, and Rockin' Johnny Burgin.

Since completing his Ph.D. in history from New York University in 2002, Sugar Brown has been living in Toronto, where he teaches as Associate Professor of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. Upon relocating to Toronto, Brown took a break from performing music, but the siren call of the blues proved impossible to resist.

Sugar Brown is now offering us an open-hearted welcome to his blues world. It would be foolish to resist.

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