

## Paul Reddick

Paul Reddick is a singer, songwriter and harmonica player whose songs help keep the roots music tradition moving forward. His songs explore the beauties and mysteries of the blues, country and folk music, and take the road less travelled around the lost and found landscapes of longing and love.

Starting with his devotion to early American music, Paul Reddick listened closely to Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson and Howlin' Wolf, and picked up the harmonica at the age of 12 — and had mastered the instrument by the time he was 15. Later, his tastes widened to include early country music, jazz of all kinds, and a whole variety of other “roots” music; his iPod covers Sleepy John Estes, Miles Davis, the Carter Family and Little Richard.



Reddick formed the groundbreaking blues band The Sidemen in Toronto in 1990, releasing three albums of original material. He and his revolving group of players spent a decade hammering out the blues across Canada and back and forth across the United States.

Paul Reddick and the Sidemen released the critically acclaimed *Rattlebag* on NorthernBlues in 2001, as he moved the emphasis toward a solo career. Produced by roots music authority Colin Linden — currently spending most of his time touring as the leader of Emmylou Harris' crack backup band — *Rattlebag* was described as a masterpiece of “hard blues for modern times”. Praise came from both sides of the border, along with nominations at the W.C. Handy Awards and the Juno Awards. The band also won three Maple Blues Awards in early 2002, including Album of the Year and the nod for Reddick as Songwriter of the Year.

It was followed by *Villanelle*, a quiet, calmer, more reflective album that earned even more critical applause. The widely acclaimed album continued re-styling the traditional past, sidestepping convention as it searched for new possibilities in blues music.

Both *Rattlebag* and *Villanelle* were both influenced by early American field recordings, reaching into the vast body of pre-war music of the type documented in Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*.

Then, two years ago, NorthernBlues released *Revue*, an 18-track collection of pieces from

previous albums, with some rarities and unreleased tracks added for good measure. Suddenly, an artist with no “hits” had a “greatest hits” album that emphasized and underlined a maturing musical philosophy. He had, indeed, successfully combined the mystery of the blues art form with the powerful spell cast by poetry.

In addition, Reddick’s music has been used in a variety of television shows and movies, and — surprisingly, and he still doesn’t know how it came about — in a Coca Cola commercial that has been seen on U.S. TV for two years.

SugarBird brings the Reddick story up to date

SugarBird, his most realized work to date, is once again produced by Linden, who adds his superlative guitar playing to every track. Linden co-writes the songs with Reddick, and the album includes two of Linden’s compositions.

A small supporting cast includes The Band’s Garth Hudson on accordion, LA bass player extraordinaire Hutch Hutchinson from Bonnie Raitt’s band, Nashville drummer Bryan Owings (Emmylou Harris, Shelby Lynne), and the core of Blackie & The Rodeo Kings’ rhythm section, Gary Craig (drums) and John Dymond (bass). Alternate bassist Dave Roe, from Dwight Yoakam’s band, worked with Johnny Cash for 12 years. Arrangers Chris Carmichael and Darrell Leonard are also make significant contributions on strings and horns respectively.

The songs themselves cover a wide gamut, from rollicking lust (“*It’s Later Than You Think*”) to hopeful love songs (“*Wishing Song*,” “*Every Temptation*”), from gut bucket blues (“*Block of Wood*”) to delights of pure imagination (“*John Lennon in New Orleans*”). “*Breathless Girls*” and “*Blue Wings*” are expositions of longing and beauty, tapping into the tactile images of poetry, overlaid with the richness and depth of the music itself.

Reddick continues to perform in Europe once or twice each year, where the critical applause for his work equals that at home in Canada. He plays festivals across Canada, and is in demand as a session player — he’s appeared on recent CDs by Kathleen Edwards, Colin Linden, Susie Vinnick, Treasa Levasseur, David Baxter and others.

Meanwhile, Reddick continues to walk dogs as his daily job — which gives him, in the middle of a turbulent city, time to think and the space to let his imagination fly with the birds.