

JOE LOUIS WALKER

Joe Louis Walker is a true powerhouse guitar virtuoso, unique singer and prolific songwriter. Walker, a Blues Hall of Fame inductee and four-time Blues Music Award winner, has toured extensively throughout his career, performing at the world's most renowned music festivals, and earned a legion of dedicated fans. His latest, highly-acclaimed album *Everybody Wants A Piece*, from Mascot/Provogue, cements his legacy as a prolific torch bearer for the blues. Looking back on his rich history, Walker shares, "I'd like to be known for the credibility of a lifetime of being true to my music and the blues. Sometimes I feel I've learned more from my failures, than from my successes, but that's made me stronger and more adventurous, and helped me create my own style. I'd like to think that when someone puts on one of my records they would know from the first notes, 'That's Joe Louis Walker.'"

Born in San Francisco on Christmas Day his parents were both from the South and they brought their love of blues with them when they headed west. Joe's dad played blues piano, and his mom played B.B. King records. Walker picked up the guitar as a child, and by the time he was 16 was regularly backing touring blues artists rolling through town. San Francisco's music scene was quickly becoming a melting pot of blues, jazz and psychedelic rock, and Walker was right in the center of it. As a 16-year-old, Walker was the house guitarist at San Francisco's famed musical playground, *The Matrix*, where he played with or opened shows for everyone from *Lightnin' Hopkins* to *Jimi Hendrix* to *Thelonious Monk*. He was also a regular at *The Fillmore West*. The blues legends Walker accompanied shared not only musical knowledge but also their personal wisdom with the teenage up-and-comer. *Fred McDowell*, *Ike Turner*, *Albert King*, *Freddy King*, *Robert Jr. Lockwood*, *Lightnin' Hopkins* and many others taught, fed, and chastised the youngster.

Inspired by what he learned, Walker developed his own fiery, melodic, and always unpredictable guitar attack. Walker met guitarist *Michael Bloomfield* in 1968 and the two became fast friends. *Bloomfield* helped push Walker's blues in a more rock-fueled direction, and he became the single biggest influence on Walker's sound. The two shared an apartment for years and remained close friends until *Bloomfield's* death in 1981. From 1975 to 1985, prior to joining *Alligator Records* in 2012, Walker released 23 albums and toured the world virtually non-stop. He has garnered four Blues Music Awards and has been nominated a whopping 52 times. He holds an international reputation as one of the blues' most prolific and talented stars. He's also recorded as a guest with some of the blues world's best-known artists, including appearances on Grammy-winning records by *B.B. King* and *James Cotton*.

In 2013 *The Blues Foundation* inducted Walker into *The Blues Hall of Fame*. "I am honored to be in the company of the great artists already inducted," Walker said at the time. "I hope to live up to the honor." Joining the ranks of previous inductees, including *B.B. King*, *Hound Dog Taylor*, *Koko Taylor*, *Willie Dixon*, *Muddy Waters*, *Etta James*, *Howlin' Wolf* and other blues greats, while still at the peak of his musical powers is, according to Walker, "a dream come true."

With each subsequent release Walker's audience continues to grow as his touring schedule expands. He's played all over the U.S. and Canada, major European festivals including *The North*

Sea Jazz Festival, Glastonbury, Notodden and Montreux, as well as festivals in Japan, Australia, Taiwan, Ireland, Turkey and Brazil. Now, with Hornet's Nest, Walker is excited about bringing even more people to his music. "Blues is a big tent," he says, "morphing into a bigger tent. Young folks like good blues when they hear it, and I'm here to make sure they want to listen."

NPR Music has called Walker "a legendary boundary-pushing icon of modern blues," and he is already being referred to within the blues world as a living legend. However, at this stage of his life, Walker profoundly shares, "I'd really like to inspire younger musicians to carry on the legacy of blues/roots music – but play and do it your way – don't be afraid to mix it up. There's no right or wrong way, just the way you wanna express yourself. And above all, ENJOY YOURSELF."