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Colman Domingo

The Tony award winner tells us about bringing his one man show to London



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was still fit. They said about six or seven months, and we're approaching that now. Did my reaction surprise me? I suppose it did. We've all probably imagined what we'd feel like if we were told we only had a few months to live. When the guy told me, I was absolutely calm. It was as if he was telling me something I'd known all my life. Walking out of the hospital afterwards, into the sunlight, looking at the sky and the trees, I thought... 'I'm alive, so intensely alive' I just felt this joy. I wasn't like that before – generally I'm a miserable so-and-so, prone to depression. But for the first six months I was on a kind of high, just enjoying the moment. I suddenly realised, you don't have to worry about the future now because there is no future. You don't have to worry about the past because you can never really make amends. All you can do is enjoy the moment as it comes.

"Obviously I couldn't walk around with a sappy smile on my face for a whole year! I get bad

days. But I've never fallen into despair about it. I mean, look at me, I've been so lucky. I'm still feeling healthy now. I've had a wonderful year, with this consciousness. I've been to Japan four times – I love it there. We did a farewell tour in April, then I retired. After a couple of weeks, I didn't really like it! But because I don't know when the illness would strike me and make me incapable of playing, I didn't want to book gigs not knowing if I would be able to play. Then summer came, and the great thing is I can do festivals and if I'm not able to play it's not going to stop the show, so we've done a few. But as the summer dwindles into the autumn... As long as I'm feeling fit why not?

"The cancer gives a whole different feeling to performing. One of the great things about rock and roll is that it's ephemeral, of the moment. Playing a gig with this consciousness, it's like... look, man, this is passing."

A final question. So, what is the best thing about being Wilko Johnson?

"Aaaargh! I dunno!... I'd have to say, I spent 40 years with my late wife Irene. She died nine years ago, I'm still in love with her, and she was the greatest thing in my life." ★

Look out for more gigs at www.wilkojohnson.org. And go to www.theamerican.co.uk, where Wilko tells us about the London pub rock scene, how Dr Feelgood influenced the punk explosion, the 'Thames Delta', speaking Old Icelandic, owning William Burroughs' gun, acting in Game of Thrones and more.

The son of Muddy Waters, Mud loves playing in Britain but can't wait to get back to Chicago cooking, he tells Darren Weale

If award-winning Blues singer Mud Morganfield were to choose an ideal home, it would probably be an aircraft carrier moored permanently in the mid-Atlantic to make it simpler to travel between his shows in the US and Europe. Mud recently played the aptly named North Sea Jazz Festival alongside an array of big names. When we caught up with Mud backstage at London's Blues Kitchen in Camden, he told us that was the last time he went out of his way to watch performances by fellow artists. Mud reflected, "Yes, that was when I was playing at the North Sea Jazz Festival! I went to see Larry Graham and Prince. Prince is always good. Larry Graham was excellent. The North Sea Jazz Festival is one of the greatest festivals I've been to. The fans went crazy, asking, yelling and screaming for more, though I couldn't do much except our encore, with the next act coming up, and the next act was Sting!"

Mud, the eldest son of American Blues legend Muddy Waters and Mildred McGhee, is cooking up a storm in the world of the Blues. Brought up in a rough neighborhood in Chicago and without his father present after his early childhood, Mud has come relatively late to performing. A career largely spent as a truck driver isn't perhaps ideal before becoming a full-time Blues singer, but music is in Mud's blood. One lesson he has certainly taken from his father has been to surround himself with top



At the Blues Kitchen, Camden: Jed Van Kleef, Ronni Busack-Boysen, Laurie Garman, Big Joe Louis, Mud Morganfield, Fred Jelly Brain Parodi, Kat Pearson and Francesco Accurso

PHOTO: JENNIFER NOBLE



Mud Morganfield: Transatlantic Blues

musicians, with hand-picked bands both in the States and a touring European band that accompanied him when he appeared on British TV show *Later... with Jools Holland* in 2012. Mud says of the show, "It was fantastic, great! I felt honored to be there."

Another British connection came about when *House*-actor turned Bluesman, Hugh Laurie, invited Mud to join him onstage at Chicago's Park West Theater, a clip from which can be found on YouTube in the *Perspectives* documentary about the Blues and Hugh's music with The Copper Bottom Blues Band. Hugh was subsequently quoted in *Blues Matters* magazine as saying, "Mud Morganfield carries himself like a prince of the blood. He wore the third best suit in the world and sang the paint off the walls. It was a great night." Mud has another US-UK connection. Kat Pearson, a London-based singer originally from Los Angeles, performs with Mud in an argumentative duet, *Payin' My Dues*, on her soulful and compelling debut Kat & Co album, *I Kat The Blues*.

So, how did the truck driver turn singer? Mud credits his mother, and

a series of events. First, Mud says his father appeared in dreams, playing music to him. Second, he and his mother were watching a TV tribute to Muddy Waters and his mother cried when she realised her son didn't get a mention. Third, on his mother's 75th birthday, Mud had Chicago Blues singer Mary Lane play. When she realised Mud's vocal ability and extraordinary legacy, she helped him perform and play live, leading to a first appearance at the Chicago Blues Festival and a debut album. It is, though, Mud's second album, *Son of the Seventh Son*, that has really helped him take off. Joined by notable Chicago musicians including harmonica men Bob Corritore and Harmonica Hinds, and son of his father's drummer, Kevin 'Beedy Eyes' Smith, plus Barrelhouse Chuck, Billy Flynn, E.G. McDaniel, and Rick Kreher, Mud produced a fine album. Nominations for numerous awards followed, and Mud now has two Blues Blast awards to put alongside photos of his late father in his home. Mud says of the awards, "I'm enjoying them immensely, they're better than the money sometimes, they are achievements and

show recognition from my peers."

So, what does Mud Morganfield miss when touring? "Home! Chicago is my home, man, I was born and raised there and I'll end by dying there.

"And I miss the food. There are so many great places to eat, but two I love are Ruby Tuesdays with their baby back ribs, and Johnny's Beef, for their beef sandwich." It is easier to enjoy being away from home when you have a welcome at your destination, and Mud agrees that is what he gets in the UK, "A great crowd live here, friendly people, the same in the US." ★

To see Mud's news and live dates, check out his website: www.mudmorganfieldblues.com, which also contains links to Mud's appearances on *Later... with Jools Holland* and Hugh Laurie's documentary. Other sites of note:

www.katandco.co.uk
www.theblueskitchen.com
www.bluesmatters.com

Another UK venue where Mud performs is the Boisdale, Canary Wharf (reviewed in *The American*, May 2013): www.boisdale.co.uk