

# SMALL BLUES TRAP

<http://blues.gr/profiles/blogs/paul-karapiperis-of-small-blues-trap-talks-about-greek-blues>

## Paul Karapiperis of Small Blues Trap talks about the Greek Blues Scene & the Ocean of Blues Tales

**Interview by Michael Limnios**

**When was the first time you felt the need to play the blues?**

It happened when I discovered that the blues is the root, the “holly mother” that gave birth to Rock music and all the other musical genres that followed. It was like a spiritual call for me and I must admit that I was enchanted and thrilled to follow its paths.

**What were your first influences in music and which were the first songs that you learned?**

My musical influences come from a wide spectrum of musical genres. The first songs I learned to play were Rembetica. I was fooling around with my dad’s bouzouki when I was seven years old. When I got ten I had piano lessons and later on I started playing the guitar and the harmonica. The last two instruments have become my favorite and I remain stuck to them to this very day.

**Is the “blues” a way of life? What does the BLUES mean to you?**

That’s for sure. The Blues is a way of life! It is a very personal feeling that reflects what we call real life with its ups and downs.

**Tell me about your first solo album “Fifteen Raindrops in an Ocean of Blues Tales”.**

It is a collection of songs that are connected to one another and offer some kind of a story in progress. I imagined the life of a person with all of its ups and downs. The end and the beginning seem to coincide and together they form what one would call the “circle of life”.

**How did Epikouris get impressed by that album so as to write a book that has the same title with your CD?**

Dimitris heard the album and was impressed. Then, he thought of a story by taking the titles of each song. He followed each song and ended up writing 15 chapters using the same order of the songs. He said to me that the CD enabled him to write about some emotions of his that were hidden inside, emotions of happiness and sadness as well as nostalgia. It is a book that accompanies the CD and it contains the inspiration that Dimitri's derived out of the album. I am truly honored that my music manages to trigger such emotions that can take the shape and the form of a book.

**What are some of the most memorable gigs you've had?**

I can't forget our first gig in Salonica when we were called to play as the support band of Blues Wire. Since then, we have played in front of big crowds starting with our participation in a festival that took place at the THEATRO VRACHON (The Theater of the Rocks in Petroupolis). We have also participated in events that combined other arts such as painting and poetry always in collaboration with individuals that respect what we do and have appreciation for our music.

**Of all the people you've met with, which one do you admire most in the Greek blues scene?**

Elias Zaikos (Blues Wire).

**How did the blues music started revealing its secrets to you?**

The albums that I was avidly listening to.

**What has the Blues offered you & why do you play the blues?**

As a blues listener, the straightforwardness expressed by all bluesmen has offered me great moments of enjoyment and vibrating emotions simple because what these bluesmen do comes straight from the heart. As a musician, I have chosen to play the blues so as to express my own feelings, my own emotions and my own way of thinking on matters that are of great importance to me. The blues helps me observe myself better and search deeper inside of me.

**How does music help re-discover yourself?**

Before someone composes a song, he enters a pretty unique process which involves diving deeply into his inner world looking for undiscovered emotions that haven't been surfaced. It is also very important to continuously try to improve yourself not only musically but also in terms of collaborating with others.

**How would you describe your contact to people when you are on stage?**

It's a "Crossroads Ritual"...(he laughs). Our audience knows about it.

**What experiences in your life make you a GOOD musician?**

Both the positive and the negative ones. Constructive criticism also helps a great deal.

**What mistakes in the "blues business" would you wish to correct?**

I don't think that I could do such a thing.

**Which of the blues historical personalities would you like to meet?**

Robert Johnson, Sonny Boy Williamson, Robert Nighthawk & Willie Dixon are some of them.

**Tell me about the beginning of the band. How did you get together and where did it start?**

The band was formed in 2004. Having finished with my sociology studies and my military obligations, I was back at my "stomping ground", the place where I was born and brought up. There, I found two old friends of mine, Lefteris Besios and Panagiotis Daras who had already begun playing music together. We decided to form a band and express our musical interests.

**Three words to describe Small Blues Trap & why did you choose that name?**

It would be better for our audience to express an opinion. The band name consists of three words. BLUES, because that musical genre is our base on the music we write and constitutes our shelter, TRAP because of the ability of the blues to keep you captured in its beautiful world as long as you live and SMALL because we never felt "big" since we consider our band as a company of friends that gets together to play music and have a good time.

**What is the "philosophy" of the band?**

Let's have a good time. Let the good times roll, I would say.

**How difficult is it to be a band outside the city walls of Athens?**

Extraordinarily difficult, believe me!

**Where did you pick up your harmonica style? what characterizes your sound?**

By listening to the great blues harmonica players. As far as my sound is concerned, I don't really know how to characterize it since I'm still looking for ways to enrich it and make it

recognizable and unique.

**Tell me about the album of the band “ Red Snakes & Cave Bats ”**

The “Red Snakes & Cave Bats” album is a home studio production like all the rest. The equipment that we used have nothing to do with the equipment that can be found in big professional studios but the final result is very satisfying at least to us. The difference between the last and the previous albums is the participation of Stathis Evangeliou on drums who has been a member of our band since January 2007. The album has 12 original songs and a song first composed by Elias Zaikos which we adapted to our style of playing.

**What was the last album you bought & what was the best blues album you ever had?**

The last album that I bought was “The Well” by Charlie Musselwhite. Unfortunately, I can't tell you which my favorite album is because there are so many of them.

**Some music styles can be fads but the blues is always with us. Why do think that is?**

This happens because the blues is an international language. It is a popular music genre that hits straight in the heart and comes out of your soul. It also has the unique ability to influence and be influenced by other genres without losing its basic ingredients.

**How do you see the future of blues music & what are your plans?**

I think we will always have good blues albums that will come out. There are musicians who maintain the traditional blues forms and others who alter them. The blues music will always be where human emotions are, in other words the blues music will always be everywhere. Concerning our plans, we just want to continue what we do and have the blues as the base of our musical wanderings and adventures.

**Why are Europeans so enamored with the blues?**

The American musicians who toured Europe in the sixties influenced everyone in the Old Continent so, that explains why the Europeans dig the Blues so much.

**What are the main influences of the Blues in Greece? Do you think that the blues scene of UK or the US?**

I think both!

**What are the most popular local bands of blues?**

Blues Wire, Blues Cargo, Backbone, Blues Trackers and so many other bands that play the blues and keep it alive. I want to believe that all of us are members of the big Blues brotherhood.

**Who is the leading representatives of the blues in Greece abroad?**

The bands that have played live abroad and the bands that have discography.

**What are the bars and clubs that host blues events?**

There is no club here in Greece that hosts only blues events and blues happenings. There are some clubs that occasionally host some blues events among other musical genres.

**Who are the international artists who have a special relationship with the blues in Greece?**

I think John Hammond and Big Time Sarah who have recorded in our country along with Louisiana Red and Nick Gravenites who visit us quite often.

**Do the media help the blues & what is your opinion about blues.gr?**

With a few exceptions, I don't think that the local media is interested in the blues scene. Unfortunately, we are served garbage. Regarding the site blues.gr, I think it is a great and hospitable site for all of us involved in the blues.

**Make an account for current realities of the case of the blues in Greece**

It is very encouraging that young people are getting more and more interested in the blues music. It is also very encouraging that the old blues bands are still on the road "showing the way."

**Do you think the younger generations are interested in the blues?**

Yes, I believe that the young people who have escaped from the mass media garbage, eventually end up developing a relationship with the blues music simply because the blues "talks" to their souls.

**Do you have a message for the Greek blues fans?**

I wish to thank all of them for being in love with the blues and for supporting us for seven consecutive years. I also thank them for supporting all the other blues bands as well.

**I would like you to tell me if the local music industry is involved in making blues albums.**

In the past, there were some efforts but not anymore. That is the reason why we circulate our albums by ourselves through the internet.

**Which do you think are the landmark album for local blues?**

I think the first album of the Blues Gang which was also the first blues album that was released in Greece. After that, many others followed.

**Do you believe that someone can make a living just by playing the blues in this country?**

It is very hard and only very few have managed to do it.

**What is the usual funny story that you hear in bars?**

The funny stories begin when the time to get paid comes! (he laughs). "It's a sad & beautiful world" as Tom Waits said in the Jim Jarmusch movie "Down by Law". Life's experiences, I guess.

**How do you get inspired to write a song and who were the musicians who have influenced you most as a songwriter?**

As I said before, my songs contain what I experience and what I observe. Regarding my influences, they can be from Robert Johnson, Charley Patton and Willie Dixon to Captain Beefheart, Tom Waits and The Doors.

**Describe the ideal BAND to you?**

I don't think I could do such a thing.

**What is your secret dream of the music you play?**

To push the blues a bit further.

**Do you think that your music comes from the heart, the brain or the soul?**

I think it's a combination of all of them.

**Have you ever thought of leaving your country and finding another place to play your blues?**

We haven't thought of that as of yet but who know what will happen in the future.....

**What "TRAP" should a musician, especially a blues musician be watchful of ?**

There are no traps. He should be left in the hands of music that he plays and he should treasure the experiences he acquires!

**and one last question. I would like you to put a song next to each name.**

**Small Blues Trap** : Everybody Rockin' (John Lee Hooker)

**Greek blues scene** : Playing With My Friends (B.B.King)

**Blues Jam** : Good Time Tonight (Big Bill Broonzy)

**Dimitris Epikouris** : When You Got A Good Friend (Robert Johnson)

**Paul Karapiperis** : Everything You Can Think Of Is True (Tom Waits)