



## **JOE BONAMASSA**

As Joe Bonamassa grows his reputation as one of the world's greatest guitar players, he is also evolving into a charismatic blues-rock star and singer-songwriter of stylistic depth and emotional resonance. His ability to connect with live concert audiences is transformational, and his new album, Black Rock, brings that energy to his recorded music more powerfully than ever before. The tenth solo album and eighth studio release of his career – as well as his fifth consecutive with producer Kevin Shirley (Led Zeppelin, Black Crowes, etc.) – the disc adds an enlivening dose of 'world' vibes to Bonamassa's virtuoso mix of '60s-era British blues-rock (à la Beck and Clapton) and roots-influenced Delta sounds.

The album was recorded at Black Rock Studios in Santorini, Greece. "With this album, we wanted to explore a 'world' feeling, and this was the inspiration behind going to record in Greece and using some of the best Greek musicians to add a little flavor to a couple of the tracks. But it's by no means a 'world' album. We wanted Joe's usual youthful and energetic tones to play alongside the worldly vibes of the Greek bouzouki and clarino," said Shirley. Bonamassa adds, "It was the kind of record Kevin and I wanted to make. We needed to rock again a bit like on my first album. It's youthful, like going back to your childhood." Throughout, Bonamassa is again backed by the stellar players Carmine Rojas (bass), Anton Fig, Bogie Bowles (both on drums) and Rick Melick (keyboards).

2009 was a big year for Bonamassa. He was awarded the Breakthrough Artist of the Year Award at the U.K.'s prestigious Classic Rock Roll of Honour Awards and *Classic Rock* magazine has said, "They're calling him the future of blues, but they're wrong – Joe Bonamassa is the present; so fresh and of his time that he almost defines it." He was also named Best Blues Guitarist in *Guitar Player* Magazine's 2009 Readers' Choice Awards for the third consecutive year. *Guitar Player* writer Matt Blackett has said, "He's an old soul, and that comes through in his bends, vibrato, singing voice, and note choices, which – which each passing year – get more restrained and refined."

In May '09, he played to a sold out crowd at London's Royal Albert Hall, arguably the most prestigious concert venue in the world. During the show, Bonamassa's hero, Eric Clapton, joined him on stage for a joint-performance of Clapton's hit "Further On Up The Road." London's *The Independent* said about the show, "The man has arrived, and there's no turning back." Shortly after, Bonamassa released a 2-DVD live set – Joe Bonamassa – Live From The Royal Albert Hall – which captures the night in full. *Guitar Edge* gave it five stars and also said, "It is the wallop of his emotional expression, fueled by the rocking energy he derives from that trans-Atlantic connection and driven by his devastating technical ability, that elevates him about his peers and makes him a certifiable blues guitar hero and the face of his blues generation."

Last year also coincided with Bonamassa's twentieth year as a professional musician, an extraordinary timeline for a young artist just into his '30s. A child prodigy, Bonamassa was finessing Stevie Ray Vaughan licks when he was seven and by the time he was ten, had caught B.B. King's ear. After first hearing him play, King said, "This kid's potential is unbelievable. He hasn't even begun to scratch the surface. He's one of a kind." By age 12, Bonamassa was opening shows for the blues icon and went on to tour with venerable acts including Buddy Guy, Foreigner, Robert Cray, Stephen Stills, Joe Cocker and Gregg Allman.

Bonamassa reunites with King for a duet on Black Rock. The song they perform together is a rendition of the Willie Nelson-penned song, "Night Life," which appeared on King's 1967 album *Blues Is King*. Shirley says about the experience, "This is a rollicking Stonesy-vibe version of the Willie Nelson song on which B.B. duets with Joe, both vocally and on his famous Lucille guitar. What a joy and an honor to work with the legend who is possibly the pivot point and unifying musician between blues and rock."

Other tracks appearing on Black Rock include Jeff Beck's "Spanish Boots," a lively version of Leonard Cohen's poetic "Bird On A Wire," Otis Rush's "Three Times A Fool," as well as Bobby Parker's "Steal Your Heart Away," a song recommended by Robert Plant, who said Led Zeppelin rehearsed it in their earliest days. Also, Blind Boy Fuller's "Baby, You Gotta Change Your Mind," John Hiatt's "I Know A Place," and James Clark's "Look Over Yonder's Wall," as well as the Bonamassa-penned originals "When The Fire Hits The Sea," "Wandering Earth,"

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“Athens To Athens,” and “Blue and Evil.”

Bonomassa’s recording career began in the early ’90s with Bloodline, a hard-charging rock-blues group also featuring Robby Krieger’s son Waylon and Miles Davis’ son Erin. His 2000 solo debut, *A New Day Yesterday*, was produced by the legendary Tom Dowd; Bonomassa’s rendering of the title track, originally a Jethro Tull hit, was called, “a jaw-dropping performance” by *allmusic.com*.

His last studio album, *The Ballad Of John Henry* – with no shortage of its own jaw-dropping moments – debuted at #1 on the *Billboard* blues chart and stayed there for six months. The album marks a more confessional approach to songcraft than he’s previously employed. “Making the first half of the album,” Bonomassa says, “I was in the happiest place I’d ever been in my life. The second half found me in completely the opposite state. I’ve come to the conclusion that experience makes for better art. I had more to say, and it’s the first time I’ve personally opened up the book on my life.”

Previous studio sets include 2007’s *Sloe Gin*, which debuted at #1 on *Billboard*’s blues chart and received a 2008 nod for Album Of The Year from the Classic Rock Roll Of Honour Awards. *Sloe Gin* careens between heavy electric blues-rockers and acoustic, folk-etched cuts in a flow that Bonomassa says was partly inspired by Rod Stewart’s classic 1969 solo debut LP. *Modern Guitars Magazine* wrote, “If calling *Sloe Gin* a Bonomassa sampler isn’t graphic enough, think of the album as a musical buffet in which unrelated entrees share a single trait: they taste good.” The *Boston Phoenix* called it, “an elegant and brawny guitar-hero album.”

In 2008, he released the 2-CD set *Live From Nowhere In Particular*, which *Guitar Player* said, “finds Joe playing with soul, intensity and *savage* tones.” It features 13 songs recorded live in concert on the artist’s 2007 North American tour – at shows like the one at New York’s Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center reviewed for *www.hampton.com* by Lon S. Cohen: “In a thousand years, when archeologists dig out Joe Bonomassa’s guitar from the strata of the earth, it will still be smoking...He holds the guitar like a shotgun but what comes out of it is poetry, color, and a story is told in notes.” A review of a show at Alexandria, VA’s Birchmere drew similar sentiments from writer Paul Roy on *blogcritics.org*: “I have flirted with the opinion that Bonomassa may be the overall best guitarist on the planet these days, and after seeing him perform live again...I am now totally comfortable with that opinion. He is simply mesmerizing to watch.”

Bonomassa circles the globe playing an average of 200 shows a year, and his mind-blowing guitar wizardry and electrifying stage presence are selling out progressively larger venues all the time. The *OC Register*’s Robert Kinsler has written, “Whether in a club or outdoors at a festival, something magnetic happens when Bonomassa steps to the front of the stage, leans his head back and simply lets loose.”

Ongoing journeyman touring is a given, and looking beyond *Black Rock*, Bonomassa will continue his recording collaboration with producer Kevin Shirley, who says, “It’s great working with Joe and seeing him enjoy the discovery of all these places he can go. He’s an artist who can play anything, there are so many facets to him.” Bonomassa adds, “Kevin comes up with fantastic ideas outside the box. He appreciates the blues, but pushes me, the only person besides Tom Dowd who’s done that.”

On top of touring, recording and overseeing the independent label J&R Adventures with his entrepreneurial partner and manager Roy Weisman, Bonomassa is a spokesperson for the Blues Foundation’s respected Blues In The Schools program, volunteering his time during tours to speak with groups of high school students about the heritage of blues music – the first pure American music form. Recently, he was chosen by Channel One, the largest in-school news network, to host an ongoing segment called “Know Your Roots with Joe Bonomassa” in which he traces the musical roots of Channel One’s weekly “Hear It Now” featured artist.

And, 2010 has already started with a bang – *Guitar World* dubbed Bonomassa “The Blues Rock Titan” and his song, “Lonesome Road Blues,” is a part of Guitar Hero V’s New Blues Masters Track Pack. Keeping with his blues roots but fluently moving between rock n’ roll and international sounds, 2010 is not only a new decade but a new era for Bonomassa.

For more information, log on to: [www.jbonamassa.com](http://www.jbonamassa.com)

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709 EAST COLORADO BOULEVARD • SUITE 220 • PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91101 • TEL 626.585.9575 • FAX 626.564.8920  
[www.jensencm.com](http://www.jensencm.com)