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Musicians from the Midwest have a knack for reinventing tradition. Jeff Ray is no exception. Go to any one of his performances and you'll hear his fans say the same thing, "**his music sounds old and new at the same time**".

Born and raised in Minnesota, Ray left home at the age of 17 to cut his teeth in Memphis. It was through those travels that he developed his unmistakable "**East-meets-West**" **Bluesy Americana** sound.

Watch closely and you'll see Jeff Ray's thumb keep the bass note thumping while he glides a glass slide seamlessly across the fret board. At the same time, his foot drives a heavy backbeat on a homemade portable front porch while an electronic tanpura drones at his side.

Ray's new effort and fourth release, BLUE MARA, has received critical acclaim across Europe and North America. Blues Matters (UK) says, "the overall result is impressive, with the dozen songs bearing traces of the darker side of Americana, though far bluesier than is usually encompassed by such a definition". The CD was recorded on an old-fashioned reel-to-reel with the emphasis placed on capturing the energy of a live performance.

When asked about the overall feel of BLUE MARA, Jeff describes it as "early 60's Chicago-blues and 1920's pre-war blues, accented with the pervasive rhythms of Appalachia and the loftiness of East-Indian melodies." If that description sounds hard to pigeonhole, it's because it is. According to John Ziegler of the Duluth News Tribune, BLUE MARA has "no mopey re-creations; Ray's take on the genre is fresh and original... The guitar is hyper-animated and jumps out of the mix. Ray has mastered the ability to go speedily from fretted notes to glassy slide in a nanosecond. It provides the feel of two guitar players at the same time".

Marking the release of BLUE MARA, Jeff Ray unveiled a lineup of guest musicians to fill-out his one-man-band sound. The musicians are some of Minnesota's finest and include; Mikkel Beckmen (washboard), Nick Salisbury (bass), Harold Tremblay (harmonica), Brianna Lane (vocals), and Eliza Blue (fiddle/vocals), to name a few. Depending on the performance, you could catch Jeff Ray live as a solo act, as a duo, or even as a five-piece band. According to Jeff, "the variable lineup creates a lot of excitement and individuality to each show. It really makes each show special and adds some diversity to the types of venues we play".

Jeff Ray and his lineup of guest musicians have been featured at a number of high-profile venues, including: **the Taste of Minnesota, the Porcupine Mountains Festival, Deep Blues Festival, Highland Fest, Acoustic Sounds Café (NPR), and Radio Heartland (NPR)**, to name a few. He has shared stages with Chris Smither, Justin Townes Earl, Indigenous, Spider John Koerner, Earl Greyhound, the Black Diamond Heavies, Pat Donohue, Retribution Gospel Choir, Dawes, Charlie Parr, James Hunter, Marcia Ball, and many more.

In 2009, Ray won second place in the Spotlight Songwriter Competition in Minneapolis, MN and in 2010, Jeff Ray and Harold Tremblay (harmonica) **won first place** in the Greater Twin Cities Blues Society's 'Road to Memphis' competition. They were selected to represent Minnesota at the **2011 International Blues Challenge** in Memphis, TN.

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“Jeff has a warm singing voice and plays some stinging slide guitar work. These tracks - eleven originals and a fine version of Muddy Waters’ “You Can’t Lose What You Ain’t Never Had” - are sometimes very reminiscent of [Chris] Smither himself, though Jeff occasionally incorporates different styles of Blues and even the odd Indian flavour to the mix, and the Dylan comparison is certainly justifiable on a couple of songs. The overall result is impressive, with the dozen songs bearing traces of the darker side of Americana, though far bluesier than is usually encompassed by such a definition.”

**-Norman Darwen (Blue Matters, UK)**

“No mopey re-creations; Ray’s take on the genre is fresh and original... The guitar is hyper-animated and jumps out of the mix. Ray has mastered the ability to go speedily from fretted notes to glassy slide in a nanosecond. It provides the feel of two guitar players at the same time... In his still-young recording career, Ray has covered Southern rock (ala the Allman Brothers), Memphis soul, Nick Drake-inspired songs, stirring acoustic instrumental guitar, resonator slide, and now blues from the pre-Depression era as well as the '60s... You never know what’s coming next. Here’s to lots more stops along the Jeff Ray recording highway.”

**-John Ziegler (Duluth News Tribune, Duluth MN)**

“Jeff Ray’s fourth album is indeed a must for anyone who has a soft spot for acoustic, semi-acoustic and resonator slide-guitar in particular... His fingerpicking and bottleneck playing style have a very high degree of perfection and precision. Leo Kottke and Bob Brozman are never far away and, without hesitation, he can get a place in the list of great sliders. This album is very blues oriented but remains open to “world” influences... “Blue Mara” is a treasure that makes it irresistible to grab your guitar.... Another great artist that we should not lose sight [of].”

**-witeMVS (www.rootsville.be, Belgium) [English Translation by Google Translate]**

“Thousands of miles may separate Indian music from the Memphis blues, but slide guitarist Jeff Ray has found a way to blend the two”

**-David Henke (Northfield News, Northfield MN)**

“The clarity and precision of Ray’s bottleneck playing, as it swoops and dives through his vocal lines, is so well-honed and has such an alluringly liquid quality that it puts him in a league with the best on the planet. Folks such as Ry Cooder, David Lindley and Bob Brozman have nothing on this young virtuoso.”

**-John Ziegler (Duluth News Tribune)**

“Ray’s honeyed vocals and deft slide guitar stylings offer blues fare more contemplative than gritty, with a vibe that’s equally indebted to Ravi Shankar, Nick Drake, and Greg Brown. Simply lovely.”

**-Susannah Schouweiler (access+Engage, martists.org)**

“Jeff Ray is a rising musician... The various influences and mixture of sounds resembles so much, and yet becomes something very unique.”

**-Andrew Olson(Reader Weekly, Duluth, MN)**

“a quality that could only come by blending the birthplaces of Bob Dylan and the delta blues.”

**-Joe Lawler (Des Moines Register, Des Moines, IA)**

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