



Chris O

Chris is a singer-songwriter from Australia, who covers the songs of a bygone era and her own contemporary roots originals.

She plays vintage music, the way it used to be, mixed in with blues and folk that echo global grassroots traditions.

Traveling around carrying her "Band", just like a pack pony ~ lap-slide, banjo, ukulele, as well as a few plain ole guitars, stirring up jellyroll and jinx.

Chris tours Europe annually, and in 2016 was NSW Solo Blues Artist of the Year representing Sydney Blues Society at the International Blues Challenge, and the National Women in Blues Showcase in Memphis, Tennessee. Her recent blues albums feature in the Australian and UK Blues and Roots Charts, and AMRAP Charts. In 2017 "Wailin' & Raggin' the Blues" was a Blues Foundation (USA) Finalist for Best Self Produced CD.

"Chris captures the cold hard nature of the blues, and delivers it in a velvet-wrapped package". Iron Mike Norton

Contact

Website: www.chrisokunbor.net Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/chris-okunbor>
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/chris.okunbor.2>
 Email: cokunbor@hotmail.com

Played at

Folk & Blues Festivals, Clubs, Pubs around the World.

Three tours of Europe, playing Germany, The Netherlands, France, Denmark, Scotland & England.
 Regional Festivals and Clubs around Australia.

Produced

"Peckmans Plateau" and "Wailin' & Raggin' the Blues" albums in 2014 and 2016.

"Babble-on" World music TV series for SBS TV, 1996 (Music Arranger / Director, Producer).

"Songs and Chants" CD of Children's World Music, 1989

Awards

"Love this Land" ~ Winner, 2012 Love Lawson Festival Songwriting Competition

NSW Representative for the International Blues Challenge, Memphis 2016

Interviews

The Country Blues, USA
 Women in Blues Radio Program (Australia)

Living Blues Experience (Netherlands)
 Nostrovia Music ~ 10 Questions
 Sing Out! Magazine, USA

www.thecountryblues.com/artist-reviews/chris-okunbor/
 88.3 Southern FM Melbourne
 The Black Opal Agency Interviews, soundcloud.com
 010 FM Rotterdam Livin Blues Radio
nostroviamusic.wordpress.com/2014/11.../10
 "Folk finds" - July 2015



TheCountryBlues.com (USA)

Chris Okunbor

by Australia Correspondent Julie Fox



Although “Chris O” (Okunbor) has been based in Australia for the last 34 years, she considers herself a bit of a global citizen. Born in England, but having spent a fair amount of time hemisphere-hopping; living in South Africa, New Zealand, Iran, and “hanging out in a lot more countries.” Chris is currently a resident of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, and is pretty settled, but does occasionally gaze to the distant horizon and considers Berlin as being the next adventure on her “bucket list!”

Chris got hold of her first guitar at about 12 years of age, after begging and cajoling her parents for one. They were the years of the huge folk revival that was sweeping through England, and country blues was very much a feature. She wasn’t drawn to the polished roots music coming out of some of the university

campuses of America and England, but gravitated towards the sounds of the original blues-makers, such as Reverend Gary Davis, Lonnie Johnson, Queen Victoria Spivey, and of course, much beloved by the Brits at the time, Josh White. In those heady days of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, roots music was intertwined, with many of the folkies moving seamlessly between traditional European, alternative folk, and country blues pieces.

Other earlier musicians to have a profound effect on Chris’ musical style during those years were players such as Son House and Muddy Waters, who were touring outside of America, and were, in turn, teaching and sharing with some of the younger generation. People like Jo-Ann Kelly, Stefan Grossman, and Woody Mann. Chris remembers being stopped in her tracks when she first heard a recording of “Oh Death” by Jo-Ann Kelly and the Groundhogs....which led her straight back to the source, Charlie Patton and Bertha Lee. This is a song in her regular repertoire today, but in the spirit of the ‘70s, she has arranged the guitar in a semi-open tuning, contrasting the dark minor tones of the gospel blues melody line with guitar instrumentation in major keys.

Chris O still paints from a wide pallet, drawing on many styles of acoustic blues and roots music. She is a prolific songwriter who experiments with many roots styles and has a love of co-writing, composing, and recording with a whole raft of musicians around the world, via online musical communities such as Sound Cloud. Flowing out of her deep love for very early blues and hollers, she also enjoys “writing the tradition”, composing new songs with a vintage feel, but contemporary edge, such as “Good Lovin Man” and “Workin the Cottonfields”, which are featured on her 2016 album.

“It’s really important to me that I honour the sources of blues music, and the hardships people endured, which is at the heart of the music. A piece may be a deeply sad and moving testament, or an upbeat funny observation of life and love, but my litmus test of a song is to pause and consider if there is enough depth and humanity there that my musical mentors would find something worth listening to if they were sitting in the room with me. It was so special to get feedback from some of the older local Afro-American blues players down in the Memphis/Delta area that they really enjoyed my Old School stuff.”

As a solo singer/instrumentalist, Chris plays a number of instruments, such as banjo, ukulele, lap slide guitar, 4 string biscuit tin guitar, Dobro, Irish whistles, bodhran, and, of course, “plain ole guitars.” She has a few favourites; her mahogany Martin dreadnought, single cone National steel resonator, and an 8 string Lanakai uke.

On her tours in Europe, and more recently America, Chris gets a real buzz out of performing live with musicians she has worked with in “Cyberspace.” In the Netherlands, for example, she plays with blues artists such as the blues/jazz guitarist Iwan Gronert and Niko Christiansen, from the ‘70s, and current, chart topping blues band, Livin’ Blues Xperience.

In 2016 Chris O represented the Sydney Blues Society as the Solo Contestant for NSW, Australia at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. Whilst in town she also performed at an International Showcase, and the prestigious National Women in Blues Showcase. “Playing in Memphis, and later down in the Delta, were very special experiences. To hang out in places that were the inspiration for much of my music was very important, as was meeting up with musicians from the area. Times are still extremely tough for many folks living in Mississippi and Tennessee, and I can see the blues is just as relevant today as it was in the ‘30s – providing a voice for the battlers.”

While in Memphis for the IBC, Chris connected with many blues artists from around the globe, and is getting radio airplay in many countries. “A real highlight of my trip was to play a couple of numbers in Red’s Blues Club in Clarksdale, and then to meet up with Red the next day and talk about the original acoustic players still alive and playing around the Delta.” In the last two years Chris has toured Europe twice, playing blues clubs and bars in France, The Netherlands, Germany, the U.K. and Denmark, as well as a few weeks in the USA. Over the years she has played at a number of Australian Blues festivals and is a regular performer at the latest dedicated jazz and blues venue in the Blue Mountains – the aptly named Hotel Blue!

<http://www.thecountryblues.com/artist-reviews/chris-okunbor/>

Chris O - Testimonials

Chris is a gifted songwriter, understated singer and wicked multi-instrumentalist with catholic tastes, and a penchant for inspired and creative collaborations...Chris's forte and primary passion is the blues, with a special nod toward pre-war pickers. A great example of Chris's fluidity and exuberance is her take on Bukka White's classic Jitterbug Swing....the whole production has a lo-fi finish that enhances a timeless, archival quality that is common to much of Chris's best work.

"SingOut Magazine", (USA)

<http://singout.org/2015/07/30/folkfinds-chris-okunbors-jitterbug-swing/>

Acoustic blues has always had a special spot in my heart and soul. It is the sound of pure music and connection between artist and instrument that first called me to the blues. So thank you to the artists that carry on this tradition. We first met and saw our winner at the International Blues Challenge. Her performance then and her new release this year makes for a bright future for her, and the acoustic branch of the tree that is the Blues.

Blues411 Jimi Award Winner (USA) - Best Acoustic Blues Release 2016

<http://www.blues411.com/2016-blues411-jimi-awards/>

Born in England, based out of the Blue Mountains of Australia for decades and — because of her extensive touring schedule — truly a citizen of the world, Chris Okunbor is a multi-instrumentalist musician who possesses a powerful, deep voices...her vocals stand out in the crowd as she accompanies herself on lap steel and other guitars, banjo and ukulele.

Wailin' And Raggin' The Blues is worth the effort to acquire if you're a fan of acoustic blues. The covers are all solidly original despite their age and recording history, and Chris O is a songwriter of the first order. A delight from beginning to end.

Marty Gunther, Blues Blast Magazine (USA)

<http://www.bluesblastmagazine.com/issue-11-22-june-1-2017/>

Blues and Roots Singer-Songwriter Chris O has a strong penchant for constructing music that draws the listener into her storytelling, her music jumps out at you and forces your foot to tap or your head to bob. Her rhythm is undeniable, her soul shines, all this backed with a strong work ethic and a hectic gigging and recording schedule.

Sailing La Vagabonde

<http://sailing-lavagabonde.com/good-vibrations-to-soothe-a-sailors-soul/>

"...Got it going; really like her ! Wouldn't Jefferson and Blake be pleased that these spectral songs had been resurrected? Fine guitar player, too."

Martin Cooper - Blues Guitar Legend, 'Dutch Tilders Band'

From: <http://womeninblues.bandzoogle.com/bio>

With a delivery somewhere between Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Memphis Minnie, Chris's own songs stay firmly within the tradition that has so inspired her, with trains, work gangs, and cotton fields the backdrop to the usual tribulations of life, from hard lovin' to just makin' ends meet workin' for the Man. You can hear the passion, the commitment, and that gives her own songs the necessary authenticity, a true master's apprentice.

Michael Smith, Rhythms Magazine, January/February 2017

I have presented a weekly 2-hour blues radio program on 3WAY-FM, Warrnambool VIC for the past 18 years. During that time I have had the privilege of listening to, and playing on air, the music of many fine Australian blues and roots music artists. In the deluge of new music releases that appear in my mailbox, I was instantly impressed by Chris O's "Peckman's Plateau" when I first received it a couple of years ago. Her covers of a variety of traditional blues songs demonstrate a wonderful and sympathetic connection to the early blues era. Her respect for this music and its originators is obvious to anyone who has listened to them. Chris has an evocative and honest vocal style that rejects the over-production of much of today's music. So too, her instrumental abilities. Having said that, Chris O is also about strong songwriting in traditional and contemporary contexts. I have enjoyed a number of her own compositions and collaborations on www.soundcloud.com . The collaborations also see Chris extending her repertoire beyond the blues into other roots music styles.

**Martin "Lazy Lester" Dunstan, "JuzBlooz", 3WAY-FM
103.7 MHz, Warrnambool, VIC. Tuesdays, 8.30 - 10.30 pm.**

I have been playing two CDs by Chris O on my blues program "Blues Come Down Like Hail" for some months. I regard Chris O as an excellent interpreter of the classic blues of the 20s and 30s, imbuing these tracks with her own style and a fresh approach. What she is doing is different from what most Australian female blues and roots artists are playing and recording in that she builds on the tradition of the great Afro-American blues artists. She is no mere copyist but adds to the original material. Her original compositions while based on the classic country blues move over into the wider based roots genre. Her writing is strong, original and extends her repertoire effectively. Her guitar playing is strong and underlines her approach to historically based contemporary interpretations of the classic blues, taking her beyond being an artist who can only copy the original artists. I believe that Chris O would be a popular performer at Folk Festivals, and present a link between the old style country blues and the performers who present contemporary blues. I have interviewed Chris and appreciate her understanding of the blues and its relationship to the contemporary scene. I feel that she could also present a workshop for younger musicians interested in the genre.

David Milne ~ Radio Presenter "Blues Come Down Like Hail" ~ HuonFM, Tasmania
<http://www.huonfm.com/>

Wailin' & Raggin' the Blues

New Blues from Chris O



2016 sees the second blues release of Aussie musician ~ Chris O.

The album features a mix of originals, and well loved classics.

The songs have that real country blues heart that is so distinctive of her playing; sad slides in minor keys, blues rock, chirpy fingerpicking rags, and an old skool/new skool blues-hop finale!

A long time supporter and member of the Berlin-based interactive music platform SoundCloud, some of the songs on this album are international collaborations, recorded in home studios around the world, then shared via cyberspace.

Chris invites some great musicians from the Netherlands (Iwan Gronert), USA (The Couch King), Germany (Didi Van Fritz), and Australia (Derek Phillips & Charlie McMahon) to join her, as co-writers, instrumentalists, rappers, and audio engineers on this album.

"Chris is a gifted songwriter, understated singer and wicked multi-instrumentalist with catholic tastes and a penchant for inspired and creative collaborations. While her musical DNA contemplates sean nos, country, British balladry and folk-rock, Chris's forte and primary passion is the blues, with a special nod toward pre-war pickers."

Sing Out! Magazine USA

Awesome vintage-country-blues from one of my favorite "saucy" blues girls. A

"Good Lovin' Man" gives her what she needs!

**Women in Blues Radio Program,
Kansas Kitty, Australia**

"A well-travelled and truly professional performer, Chris has an extensive repertoire of songs to make you laugh or cry, sing along with or tap your feet to, all sung with great empathy in her special style. A delicate player of the slide guitar, dobro, banjo and ukulele, her voice meanders between roughness and tenderness and is weighted with feeling."

Blue Mountains Gazette ~ Australia

<http://chrisokunbor.net/>

<https://soundcloud.com/chris-okunbor>



Photo taken at The Shack Up Inn, Clarksdale, Mississippi

Wailin' & Raggin' the Blues



A new suitcase
of
old skool blues
from
Chris O



1. Loco Howl ~ Chris Okunbor

Acoustic railway blues rock. Yep, carriage is gettin' a bit shabby but that ole engine can still shuffle, slide & howl along.

2. Broke and Hungry ~ Sleepy John Estes

Classic country blues from a Tennessee legend who recorded mostly from 1929 to 1941. My arrangement is in open G.

3. Write Me a Few Lines ~ Mississippi Fred McDowell

I first met Aussie slide player Derek Phillips in Cyberspace. Sometimes we get together and share our love of vintage acoustic blues, especially Mississippi Fred's excellent music. Derek's guitar was a one-take grab, sitting in my lounge.

4. Workin' the Cottonfields ~ Chris Okunbor

A homage to hard working people, the backbone of communities who always seem to cop the results of economic failure.

5. Lonesome Worrisome Blues ~ Iwan Gronert & Chris Okunbor

Co-write with ace Dutch guitarist Iwan Gronert on lead guitar and backing. A something old, something new blues.

6. Tell Me Baby ~ Memphis Minnie McCoy

Heard this song on a recording of King Solomon Hill, 1932, but the original was written by Memphis Minnie in 1930. Derek playing again on Resonator. With a bit of sweet cyber-connecting, Iwan did a final mix in the Netherlands.

7. Good Lovin' Man ~ Chris Okunbor

The Blues can be so therapeutic at times, here with a happy bluesy ending! Playing Kala uke & Gretsch slide.

8. Hesitating Wedding Ring Blues ~ Chris Okunbor

Yes you can! No you can't! Maybe I will! All the guitar tracks played on my National Style O Resonator.

9. Bukka's Jitterbug Swing ~ Bukka White

Giving this timeless blues an Australian feel, featuring one of the all time greats, Charlie McMahon on didgeridoo.

10. I Need Your Love So Bad ~ Mertis, John Jnr

What a song! Loved it for decades. A pleasure to be singing and playing harp along with my talented "SoundCloud" friend, Didi Van Fritz from Germany, here featured on acoustic guitar.

11. Longlife Battery Boy ~ Chris Okunbor

A little rag dedicated to a young fella who was full of energy & heart. 20 years later I'm still catching up on my sleep!

12. Crispin' Up the Biscuits ~ Chris Okunbor & The Couch King

The Couch King, smashing hip-hop artist from the US put his rap & beat out for collaboration on SoundCloud. It was such fun creating a blues-hop with all those ole biscuits references, riffs, hollers, & reverse slide!

Audio Engineering: Peckman's Studio (Chris O), Electric Sound Sculpture Studio (Iwan Gronert), SoundCave Studios (Eliot Reynolds)
Recordings also by: Derek Phillips, Didi Van Fritz, The Couch King, & Iwan Gronert
Mastering by: Benchmark Mastering (Don Bartley)