

# Foreword

by Dan Aykroyd

First and foremost, there would have been no credible Blues Brothers record, touring act, or legitimate success had Donald "Duck" Dunn not been our bass player. His collaboration and friendship with 19-year-old drummer Steve Jordan drove our music as no backbone percussive duo could have. Moreover, as John Belushi and I assembled the band with Paul Shaffer and Tom Malone, the signing of Duck and Steve Cropper—who were the core of Stax-Volt—immediately underwrote the Blues Brothers band as the genuine article.

The first Blues Brothers record, *Briefcase Full of Blues*, went triple platinum with over 3.5 million recorded units sold—a number which top artists today would be immensely pleased with. A success of this degree would never have occurred were it not specifically for Duck's counsel. To John and I, he said:

"Sure, the blues is great, and sure, right now we've got the super blues band of the century, but if we only cut blues tracks and release them, Blues Brothers or not, you won't sell a million records—not with only blues cuts. Right now the music industry and the world are experiencing a temporary gap in popular music. The disco era has just ended and this new punk/new wave movement that John likes has not caught fire yet. But if we cut 'Soul Man' and put it on the record as the lead track, I guarantee you a million-seller."

How right Duck was! Not only did he usher us to a #1 charting hit with our cover of "Soul Man," but Duck's extensive and highly eclectic knowledge of American music opened up vast choices of superb material from the Stax-Volt catalog and other sources of sometimes obscure songs. Duck turned us onto Wynonie Harris and Lowell Fulson, artists whose songs I still sing today when the privilege presents itself.

Beyond the above, Duck provided a massive stabilizing force among the sometimes fractious relationships which can evolve in musical cohesions. Duck was a peacemaker even when he was fighting with Al Rubin about something. He was fiery and passionate but also humble and self-effacing.

Duck was tough but really sweet, and by far the funniest member of the band. *The Blues Brothers* film captured some of his essence, but on the road, he was a continuous source of humor—ironic views of everyone and everything, with healthy doses of anarchy. In the end, all were impressed with his qualities as a magnetic human being, his abilities as a master craftsman, and his professionalism as a team member. To declare Donald "Duck" Dunn as a beloved figure, in the perspective of industry personnel and his friends, would not be debated by those who had the pleasure and privilege of knowing and working with him.

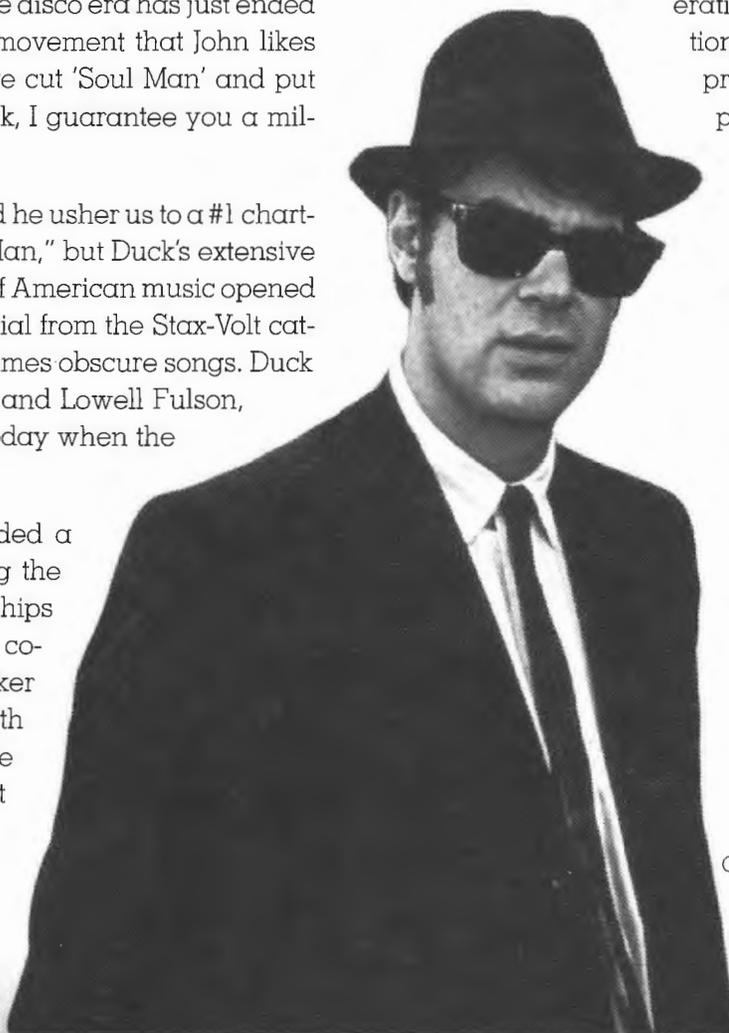
The power and penetration of his music around the world and in history cannot be overstated. It was his bass lines on "Ninety-Nine and a Half" and several other tunes at the time that thrummed deep in the American hooches of Vietnam, giving thousands of dutiful service men and women comfort throughout that war.

During the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, Stax-Volt was an integrated recording house. Duck stood on the right side of the issue through his embrace and support of the African-American artists who defined that generation of music built on traditional blues and R&B, which produced a unique appeal in popular culture.

If Duck were still with us, he would still be playing, performing, and recording, and in the process, thrilling audiences live as he did until the night he passed through the veil.

His legacy and contribution to our lives will be with us forever.

—Dan Aykroyd,  
a.k.a. Elwood Blues



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