

Darkest Night marks the debut duo CD by two internationally recognized blues artists, Christian Dozzler & Michael van Merwyk.

It takes a special kind of talent for a musician from the German-speaking part of the world to be accepted and appreciated in the country that gave birth to the blues. Christian Dozzler and Michael van Merwyk have each accomplished that rare feat – until now, independently of one another. In 2012, during a chance meeting in Memphis, the two Europeans (who originally met during the making of Larry Garner's *Embarassment to the Blues*) hatched the idea for a new acoustic duo project. Now, two years later and following a successful European tour, *Darkest Night* arrives, demonstrating the consummate musicality one has come to expect from these two world-class blues practitioners.

Vienna native Christian Dozzler, who now lives in Dallas, TX, is a heralded piano player who also includes harp and accordion in his instrumental arsenal. He's contributed to dozens of recordings over the past 30 years, including albums by his own Mojo Blues Band and Christian Dozzler's Blues Wave, as well as collaborations with Hans Theessink, Magic Slim and countless others. In 2008, he was nominated for a Blues Critic Award (US) as Best Blues Pianist. His partner, German multi-instrumentalist Michael van Merwyk, spent hundreds of nights paying his dues close to home before storming onto the international stage. His road has recently carried him from Paris to Moscow and into the USA. In 2013, his band Bluesoul journeyed to Memphis and took home second prize at the International Blues Challenge – the highest finish ever for a non-American act.

On *Darkest Night*, the two join forces to create 13 hand-made acoustic blues tracks. By unearthing a few forgotten blues gems, some almost a century old, the album serves to not only entertain but also educate the listener. Still, despite their respect for tradition, the duo doesn't want to get stuck in the past. „We both love the real old school blues, like Tampa Red, Blind John Davis, Lonnie Johnson or Otis Spann,“ explains van Merwyk. „But we're not retro musicians who simply copy the original recordings. Each of us has had the chance to learn directly from different blues musicians in a live setting, and we believe that blues is a living and creative culture.“

Thus, during a casual, one-day recording session, the pair also chose to highlight songs from their own respective catalogues. Dozzler originals like „Long Cold Winter“ or „I Can't Sleep“ feature his sure-handed and powerful barrelhouse piano; augmented by van Merwyk's nimble acoustic guitar, the songs recall the spirit of classic duos such as Big Maceo Merriweather & Tampa Red or Leroy Carr & Scrapper Blackwell. The more contemporary-sounding ballad „A Million Miles“ has a little touch of Willie Nelson to it, suggesting Dozzler's decade in Texas has certainly rubbed off. Van Merwyk's contributions include the grooving, uptempo „Good Lovin'“ and a striking „Ain't No Bluesman“ (co-written with Larry Garner). Perhaps most impressive is the elegant title track „Darkest Night,“ with Dozzler's piano subtly accompanying van Merwyk's mournful lap steel guitar and heartfelt vocal. The rollicking instrumental „Sir Wilson's Bounce“ conjures up the boogie-woogie spirit of the 1940s and leaves the listener hungry for more.

Coinciding with the release of Darkest Night in May 2014, Dozzler & van Werwyk will take to the road on their „Four Meters of Blues“ tour across Europe. Whether live or on record, their skilled interpretations of classic blues songs and equally impressive originals make one thing clear: These two guys aren't just tall. They are also long on talent.

(Vincent Abbate, March 2014)

CHRISTIAN DOZZLER

The Austro-Texan (born in Vienna) is regarded as one of the most versatile and respected blues musicians coming out of Europe. He has been performing all over the world for well over 30 years now and can be heard on more than four dozen international blues productions, including seven CDs under his own name. He made the US his home in 2000 and is now living in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. During his long career he has made a name for himself as a multi-instrumentalist (piano, harmonica, accordion, organ) and singer in bands like the Mojo Blues Band (1984-93), later his own Blues Wave (1993-2000), and after his move to America with the Larry Garner Blues Band (2000-2002). In recent years, Christian mostly performed solo on both sides of the Atlantic. He is also in demand as a valued accompanist and sideman, and tours with Texas blues legend Anson Funderburgh on a regular basis.

At the American Blues Critic Awards 2008, Christian was nominated as „Best Blues Keyboardist“.

More info on Christian Dozzler's website: www.dozzler.com

MICHAEL VAN MERWYK

In more than 25 years on the blues scene Michael (a.k.a. „The Bear“) has established himself as a versatile and tasty guitar player, a soulful blues singer, songwriter and storyteller in both the acoustic and the contemporary, electric blues worlds. He is also one of the few blues lap steel guitar players around. Over the years he has performed with numerous international blues greats (among them Larry Garner and Big Daddy Wilson), live on stage as well as in the studio. His own four CDs have garnered rave reviews in the blues media, and in 2011 Michael won the prestigious German Blues Award. His guitar stylings and powerful voice have since been heard on festival- and club-stages from Moscow to the US and all across Europe. In 2013 he won the sensational second place at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tennessee, with his band Bluesoul.

More info on Michael van Merwyk's website: www.bluesoul.de