

# ANGELA STREHLI

## *Ace of Blues*

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In the roll call of great Texas blues singers, Angela Strehli occupies some rarified air. The



*Ace of Spades*, clearly show that Strehli loves every song chosen for this outing and took great care in giving them the Midas treatment they deserve.

She even manages to capture the power and larger-than-life presence of Howlin' Wolf on *Howlin' for My Darling* and conjures the sprawling, menacing spirit of Waters on *I Love the Life I Live*. In the extensive liner notes, Strehli recalls how she helped a young Stevie Ray Vaughan develop his vocal chops, and on the album's lone original side, SRV, she pours her heart into every syllable on the tender ode to the late great Texas axe man.

Here's hoping it won't be another 17 years before Strehli gives us another taste of her vibrant, versatile, and joyful expression of the blues.

—Rod Evans

Lubbock, Texas-born singer was at the center of the 1970s and '80s blues revival that put Austin on the map.

While Strehli's recording catalog of six solo albums may be a bit slim, her outsized impact on not just Texas blues, but the genre as a whole, can't be overstated. At a time when there were precious few women mining the blues, her talent, swagger, and ability to lend a smoldering, rough-edged, yet emotional touch to any song allowed her to cut through the prevailing male-dominated ecosystem to forge a career as a first-call live performer.

***Ace of Blues***, Strehli's first album since 2005's ***Blue Highway***, lends her wonderfully rich and nuanced pipes to 11 of her favorite covers and one heartfelt original.

Shortly after Strehli—who now lives in California—arrived in Austin in the mid-'70s, she met famed club owner Clifford Antone, who enlisted her help in establishing Antone's, the world famous blues haunt that's still alive and well today. The collaboration afforded Strehli the opportunity to perform with a who's who of blues artists, such as Bobby "Blue" Bland, Muddy Waters, Little Milton, Stevie Ray and Jimmie Vaughan, Lou Ann Barton, B.B. King, Albert Collins, and the list goes on. She also fronted her own band, Southern Feeling, for a spell.

Backed by some killer players, including Mike Schermer (guitar), Jim Pugh (B3), Steve Ehrmann (bass), Mike Emerson (keys), and Kevin Hayes (drums), and with powerful horn arrangements by Rob Sudduth (tenor sax), Strehli applies her immense vocal skills and penchant for tackling challenging songs, as evidenced by the opener, *Two Steps from the Blues*. Made famous by Bland, it's a testament to vocal restraint and impeccable phrasing, and she totally nails it.

Grooving shakers, like Elmore James' *Person to Person*, Little Milton's *More and More*, Otis Clay's *Tying to Live My Life Without You*, and the soulful boogie of O.V. Wright's

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