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**Goldmine**

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## ROCK PIONEER BOBBY WHITLOCK HITS THE ROAD AGAIN



Bobby Whitlock and his wife CoCo Carmel. Photo by Todd V. Wolfson/courtesy of Kayos Production.

The Sixties were over. Eric Clapton had had it with the superstar squabbles of Blind Faith. In the only known instance of a rock star leaving his headlining band to go join the band of the opening act, Clapton left his throne to become just another guitarist lured to the goodtimey vibe of Delaney & Bonnie & Friends. That's where he met singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Bobby Whitlock, bassist Carl Radle and drummer Jim Gordon. When the soulful married couple started getting carried away with ego, cocaine and domestic violence upon becoming stars themselves, Clapton and Whitlock huddled privately and started writing the songs that have lived on for every generation since. Then they split. In fact, the whole band split, some with piano player Leon Russell for the greener

pastures of Joe Cocker's "Mad Dogs & Englishmen" tour, others (Clapton, Radle, Whitlock) to form Derek & The Dominoes.

Whitlock was loyal at first. He stuck around for the last two Delaney & Bonnie albums, but the songs he wrote with Clapton were just too damn good not to record and play them live. So he did. Ex-Beatle George Harrison was also enamored of the way D&B made music so he joined the troupe which resulted in him asking Whitlock to play on "All Things Must Pass." (Dr. John called him too to play on "The Sun, Moon & Herbs.") After the obligatory solo albums, Whitlock, who admits to participating freely in that era's excess, chucked it all to raise a family on a Mississippi farm for the majority of the 1980s and 1990s, only doing the occasional session. Then he settled in Austin where he's been ever since. His 2010 "Rock'n'Roll Autobiography" laid it all out for all to see.

Austin just may be the hippest rock'n'roll town in the U.S. It's where Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan lived out the last years of his life in perfectly contented harmony by being a local big-time kingpin. Same goes for Whitlock who was quite content to perform locally at his Saxon Pub on Lamar Blvd.

Now it's time to rev up those old juices once more.

On September 11, "The Just Us Tour 2015" will travel 5,000 miles to 11 cities and the irresistible catch is that Whitlock and his talented wife—producer/singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist CoCo Carmel—will host a different hotshot guitarist in every city they hit. It's a novel concept, maybe a first, and we caught up with the man just days before he was to leave.

Goldmine: I've been loving those songs you wrote with Clapton for years, man! It's an honor to talk to you.

Bobby Whitlock: Why thanks, Mike. Yeah, this tour, man, it's Coco and myself and we're doin' this thing acoustically. She plays rhythm guitar, I play rhythm guitar, and we go together to make one great big sound. I play piano, she plays sax. We both sing. We're doing the [Derek & The] Dominoes songs I wrote plus our versions of "Layla" and "Gotta Get Better In A Little While." She takes the vocal role I used to sing with Eric. We're bringing those songs in their essence to light. No one's ever heard them in their original form the way they were written. "Keep On Growing," "Tell The Truth" and "Why Does Love Got To Be So Sad" weren't written with a band. That was Eric and me with acoustic guitars. That, right there, will get you as close to the source as you can possibly be. You don't need the bass or the drums. Everyone hears that in their head anyway when they hear these songs. So on this tour, we're having a different guitar player from every city we're playing in. It's taking it to a whole 'nother level. We have new things we're blending in with the old and everything just fits perfectly. It's not like we're bringing those songs to life because they never died. Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi did "Keep On Growing." Cher cut "Bellbottom Blues." People

have been recording my songs for a long long time.

GM: Rehearsals must be a bitch if you have a different guitarist in each city.

BW: That's the whole point of the thing. If you're going to have somebody come and sit in with you, all they need to be is familiar with it. See, a few months ago, at the place Coco and I have in Austin, The Saxon, where we've done well over 350 shows with different configurations of bands, it almost always came back to she and I. Just us. That's why we call this tour The Just Us Tour. Everyone loves those songs and we've boiled 'em down to their essence. Playing at The Saxon has really afforded us the opportunity to get our act tight.

GM: How did you get the idea for this rather novel touring concept?

BW: There was a guy who came on to one of my facebook sites and said, "you need to hear this guy." He sent me a dozen videos. Now I don't care how good you are, I am not going to look at a dozen videos! Well, the more I ignored them, the more he sent. So one day, CoCo and I were doing a show, and I get a text from him saying, "I'm sending one more video. Please give this guy a listen." I finally relented and dang, it was really good! So this guy really wanted to put me in a studio with the guitarist and jam to the point where he would pay for it. "He already knows all your songs," the guy said. "He learned to play off that Layla album." I told him, "just have him come down to the Saxon." That was on a Friday. He brought his Stratocaster and a small amp. Dude turned out to be a premiere guitarist from Italy and he was phenomenal! CoCo and I were on acoustics and "Any Day" was the first song and, man, if he wasn't right there with us every step of the way right down to the kicks and the breaks and the solos and he never got in the way. Just beautiful! Then we went to do our new songs that no one has ever heard and he still was right there with us. You know what they say? When in doubt, lay out, right? He just fell right in there, filled that hole, complimented that line. I always tell people, "act like you're the singer" so you won't get in my way. Just play around that thing. So it was such a good set that when we loaded up afterwards, CoCo and I looked at each other and said, "wow, I think we're on to something." It just took it to a whole 'nother level without cluttering it up. You could hear the drummer...you could hear he bass player...without them actually being there, which is really good because the bass player wasn't draggin' and drummer wasn't drunk! That, right there, is when we got the idea.



CoCo and Bobby live on tour. Photo by Marc Bowman/courtesy of Kayos Production.

***Bobby Whitlock and CoCo Carmel Tour Dates:***

Sept. 11, Memphis TN, The Warehouse with Josh Roberts

Sept. 12, Nashville, TN, The City Winery with Kelvin Holly

Sept. 15, Decatur, GA, Eddie's Attic with Moses Mo

Sept. 19, New York, NY, BB King's Blues Club with Godfrey Townsend

Sept. 20, Sellersville, PA, Sellersville Theater w/ Pat Harrington

Sept. 22, Fall River, MA, Narrows Center For The Arts with Matt Hamann

Sept. 23, Somerville, MA, Johnny D's with Andy Argondizza

Sept. 26, Cleveland, OH, The Beachland Ballroom with Angelo Santelli

Sept. 27, Rochester, NY, The Lovin' Cup with Bob Wagner

Sept. 29, Ferndale, MI, The Magic Bag with Angelo Santelli

Oct. 1, Berwyn, IL, Fitzgerald's with Nicolas Tremulus - See more at:

<http://www.goldminemag.com/features/rock-pioneer-bobby-whitlock-hits-road-wife-coco-carmel#sthash.3B9HObow.dpuf>