

**Ex-Juncos : The Blues**  
*Released November 2025*



Only ten months separate Ex-Juncos' debut, *The Early Years*, and their second release, *The Blues*, and the band's growth in that time is astounding. This latest offering is an examination into varying forms of American music by two musicians coming at it from opposite directions.

Singer/guitarist Jill Rogers led the popular Bay Area honky-tonk band, Crying Time, and drummer Andrew K. Lau was involved with the Minneapolis noise-rock scene with his bands Zapruder's Slungshot and Fly Republic. They formed Ex-Juncos (in part) to answer the question of what happens when these two genres collide.

Returning to the infamous Guerrilla Studios in Oakland with Myles Boisen at the controls to start work on their latest batch of songs, Lau and Rogers finished the basic tracks in one afternoon. Each song took on new life as they were layered with additional guitar, piano, percussion, vocal, and noise tracks in subsequent sessions. By the time the album was finished, *The Blues* included a widened palate of instrumentation, as well as tracks recorded at their practice space, a farmhouse in Sweden, and a vocal track recorded on the shore of that country's second largest lake.

*The Blues* is a vast but economic epic that stays with the listener long after its 35-minute run time. It's a loosely themed album with parts of the title track, a slow and heavy improvised instrumental, turning up in between songs throughout. Feedback squeal, courtesy of an old Radio Shack intercom Lau has employed since the 90's, and Rogers' guitar drone are the album's opening sounds, opening into the lead-off track, "Maria." It's a song Rogers wrote during a workshop with Brian Eno, wherein Eno provided a list of phrases from a teach-yourself-Spanish book, and gave the instruction to use only two chords. The track is an expanded version of its original, the companion piece "Little Maria," a quieter acoustic treatment near the end of the record. "We were trying to take it to its opposite," Rogers says, "and turned it into what a rock anthem feels like to us."

The second track, "Time is a Tiger," is a hard-driving, fast-paced blues variation where Rogers sings about the inevitability of change. Up next is "3v4," which grew out of a time signature exercise for the band, with Rogers playing in three-four time, while Lau cuts through in four-four. The result is an example of how everything is slightly off kilter in the world of Ex-Juncos.

The mood shifts considerably with “Borados, Mexico 1952,” a start/stop up-tempo song with lyrics by Lau about spies in the bushes. This song also highlights how far Rogers has stepped away from her honky-tonk rhythm guitar past as she lays down her first guitar solo.

“Some Close Walking” represents the heart of the album. The lyrics are Lau’s meditation on ghosts, and musically the band takes their time leading the listener into this song’s atmosphere, building the tension only to have guest Lila Sklar’s multiple-tracked violin open it up into an unexpected emotional tornado. It’s a momentous three and a half minutes, the embers of which recede into the sound of a record skip from a Miles Davis track that leads the listener into the instrumental “Bossa (at Fillmore 1970).”

The kaleidoscope of styles and moods continues with “Mad Girl Blues,” a Chuck Berry progression played through the lens of Spacemen 3 with lyrics from a Sylvia Plath poem. At last, the record’s title track bubbles-up from the depths, revealing what has only been teased and hinted at in-between songs. Recorded at the band’s first practice space at Secret Studios in San Francisco a year earlier, the psilocybin-influenced improvisation originally ran over ten minutes. “It felt like we were discovering the blues form for ourselves,” says Rogers. “It’s also an early mind-meld experience between us.” The album version is deftly edited by Rogers down to its sweetest, most essential moments.

After the dense stomp of “The Blues,” the air particulates into “Little Maria,” the original version of the album’s opener. The song features Lau playing pot lids with a mallet, and Rogers on a vintage Stella Harmony acoustic guitar with a wire dangling across the strings, giving it a buzzy sound. It’s slightly, wonderfully, out of time. Rogers says, “We recorded ‘Little Maria’ in the studio, but guitar and vocals sounded too polished, so I re-recorded them myself at home with the Stella. The bird track is one of many amazing field recordings from the house in Sweden.”

The album closer, “Nighttime Lake Vättern Blues,” was recorded in the living room of Rogers’ farmhouse in Sweden, with Lau playing a stripped-down, borrowed kit. It’s the same room where the song was written months earlier. Rogers explains, “I was in the house in early Spring. It was night time, it was freezing, and I was alone and confined to the one room that I could get to warm up. And when I say alone, I mean there was not another person for miles around and I managed to freak myself out a little bit. Andrew and I were texting across time zones, and I told him that I was feeling a little scared and alone and he texted back, ‘stand by,’ and then sent a set of lyrics I wrote the music that evening.” As for the words, Lau says: “I used misremembered lyrics of an 80s hit song as the starting point, the rest of it fell into place quickly. I had just finished writing it minutes before Jill texted me, while I was making pancakes for my kids. The song turned into something far more poignant than I had expected.”

The instrumental tracks were recorded the following summer in the same room where the song was written. The vocals were recorded on the shore of Lake Vättern [about 25 kilometers west] at Lau’s suggestion. The song was also mixed in Sweden by drummer/painter/playwright Martin Öhman at his studio, Skogen, in Ydre. I love the ambience of the waves from the lake, and our little conversation felt important to include.”

Ending with a small conversation between the band members and the sound of the field recorder being switched off, *The Blues* is an album full of smart beauty and wonder from a hardworking band attempting to carve a new path in American music.