

## Ken Rhyne *Multitalented Blues Recording Artist*



**K**en Rhyne (Tuscarora), a Grammy-nominated blues musician and leader of the Ken Rhyne Band, is a man of many talents. He's a principal partner with the architectural firm Urban Design Group, has played professional baseball, and is a renowned singer and harmonica player. In fact, he is considered to be one of the best blues harmonica players in the world. Throughout his varied career, Rhyne has pursued a desire to create, earning him national recognition in conceptual architecture and acclaim as a musical performer. Rhyne is now poised to release his third album, titled "One Last Time."

Rhyne has been a fan of music since childhood, particularly rhythm & blues. As a young man, he played baseball for Pfeiffer University and earned a place in the Pfeiffer University Baseball Hall of Fame. After college, Rhyne embarked on a career in professional baseball, playing in the minor leagues for the Washington Senators and Texas Rangers. It was during his career in baseball that he began to gravitate toward blues. He was particularly taken with the music of Little Walter, Bo Diddley, Jimmy Reed and the J. Geils Band. He also befriended the Nighthawks, a blues and rock band based in the D.C. area.

"I started playing harmonica in the mid '70s," Rhyne recalled. "I worked at it real hard. I really got just enthralled with the instrument. I would listen to records with harmonica on them and try to emulate the tones and sounds, pick out what key it was in." Rhyne has a reputation for musical perfection. He would practice harmonica for hours on end, sometimes until his mouth bled from the effort. "This would always upset me because I couldn't play for a while."

Wanting to improve his skills on the instrument, Rhyne began seeking tips from experienced professionals, including the harp player from the J. Geils Band. "With playing the harmonica, there's a point where you reach a certain level of proficiency if you really want to do it well," he said. "But to go past that point, you have to get somebody who knows how to do it to really show you all the tricks and nuances of it." Rhyne would call up musicians whose playing he liked and ask them how they approached the instrument. "A few of the older guys helped me out a lot, so that was nice. It was kind of an open network of good friends who worked together."

By 1978 Rhyne had entered the design business, but fostered a curiosity about playing music on the road. Wanting to see if he could make a living as a musician, he decided to go on the road, touring a circuit of juke joints and taverns along the East Coast. "I played every night of the week," he said. "Back then there was a system of clubs from Delaware to Florida you could play in. There was good music every night of the week. It was never more than one or two nights at a club, but there were lots of them."

Rhyne's career as a musician began gaining momentum. Soon he was opening for some of the biggest names in blues and rock & roll, including George Thorogood and the Destroyers. "It was a treat, such a highlight," Rhyne said of playing with Thorogood. "The first two nights I played with him, he was on his 'Fifty States in Fifty Nights' tour." The band Rhyne was playing with was selected to open for Thorogood in North Carolina, and again the following night in Virginia. "He was great. He was also a big baseball fan, so we had a lot to talk about other than just music."

Rhyne played with many well-known performers, including Greg Allman, Elvin Bishop, the Neville Brothers and Etta James. He also appeared on numerous recordings, but it wasn't until 2003 that he released an album under his own name. Titled "Caught You White Handed," the recording earned Rhyne a Grammy nomination. "I wrote all the songs for the album, except one," Rhyne said. "The album's been received quite well and is still being played a lot, overseas especially." The album's title track, re-released on a compilation album, also recently topped the aboriginal music charts in Canada.

"When you go in to record your own album, you realize you have to step your game up to as high an echelon as you can get it," said Rhyne. "You can massage and manipulate things in a recording studio now, but the tape doesn't really lie. The album forced me to sit down and really work on some of my techniques that I wanted to make sure came across in the instrumental tracks."

Rhyne has all of the material written for his new album, which he hopes to complete this fall. "I think we've got some good songs," he said. "Usually if I feel pretty good about them, we can make them come out ok." The album will also include the track "Limousine," which he recorded live at the

Austell Blues Festival in Austell, Georgia.

Rhyne has a number of performances lined up through this year. His band recently opened for The Lovin' Spoonful at the annual Suwanee Festival in Suwanee, Georgia. He is also dedicating some of his performances to animal welfare. "I made it a point to do some things for animals this year," he said. "So we're doing a couple of benefits for animal shelters – one in North Carolina and one in Georgia. And Urban Design Group is completing an architectural and interior design plan for the shelter here in Georgia, at no charge."

Much of Rhyne's music carries undertones about Native people and their struggles. "Indian civil rights are very important to me," he said. "That's one thing I always want to get across." While his music has a foundation of blues, rock & roll and rhythm & blues, it often also carries a political statement or message about Indian culture. "I'd like to encourage people to search out Indian performers and support them. I also want people to have fun, dance and forget their troubles for a couple of hours. I want them to come out and just enjoy the music." ♣

*For more information about Ken Rhyne visit [www.reverbnation.com/KenRhyne](http://www.reverbnation.com/KenRhyne).*

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